



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH LEV ALBURT, US CHESS LEGEND

AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE

ACMCHESS.COM / ISSUE No.5 WINTER 2017/2018

WHERE GREAT MINDS MEET

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2018
HAPPY
NEW YEAR
❄️❄️❄️

WORLD CUP
HOW ARONIAN
WAS FIRST
ACROSS THE LINE
DAVID SMERDON

OPENING LAB
GET TO KNOW
LONDON SYSTEM
DENNIS
MONOKROUSSOS

ISLE OF MAN MASTERS
CALIFORNIA SUN
OVER A FOGGY
BRITISH ISLAND
MICHAEL BROWN



WINNER OF ISLE OF MAN MASTERS

MAN OF STEEL

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Cover photo: Magnus Carlsen, Isle of Man 2017

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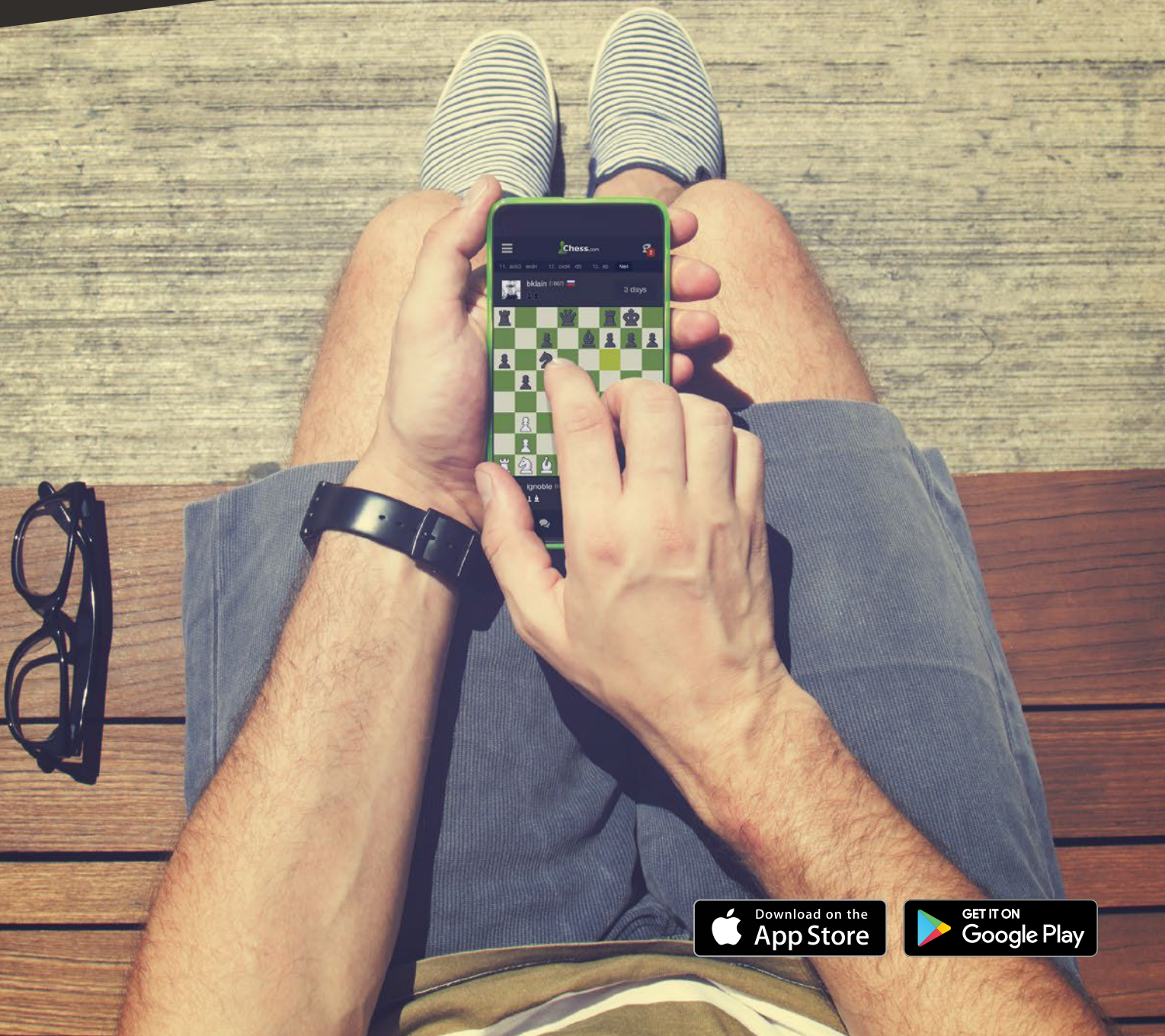
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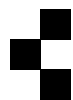
ISSN 2572-2808

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Photo by Maria Emelianova

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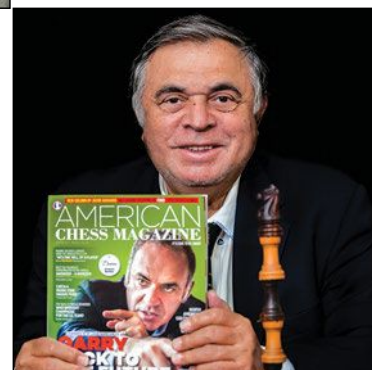


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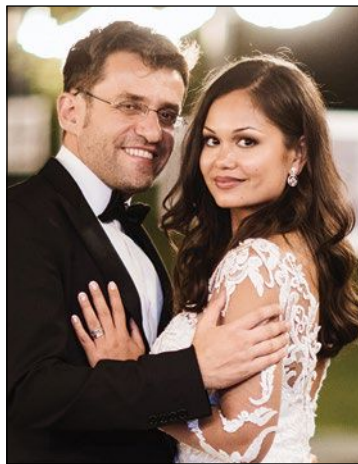
Pete Tamburo

LATEST NEWS

CARUANA VICTORIOUS IN LONDON,
MAGNUS TAKES GRAND CHESS TOUR TROPHY

American grandmaster Fabiano Caruana has closed the tournament season in the most desirable way by winning the London Chess Classic after a thrilling finish. There was a deluge of draws in the first half of the tournament, and only Caruana was able to strike – winning his games in rounds 4 and 5. But in the next three rounds it was Fabiano who made all draws, while Nepomniachtchi rocketed into the lead with three consecutive wins. Then a last-round win on demand enabled Caruana to catch up with Nepomniachtchi and eventually beat him in the very last tie-break game. The other two US players performed very well: Wesley So ended on 5/9, while Hikaru Nakamura, quite unlike his customary performances, was the only player to finish with nine draws! World Champion Magnus Carlsen was the overall winner of the 2017 Grand Chess Tour.

1–2. Caruana, Nepomniachtchi **6**; 3–5. Carlsen, Vachier-Lagrave, So **5**;
6. Nakamura **4½**; 7. Aronian **4**; 8. Karjakin **3½**; 9–10. Anand, Adams **3**.

ARONIAN'S DOUBLE
CELEBRATION

After winning his second World Cup, Levon Aronian delayed his celebrations for a couple of days as these coincided with another milestone in his life – marrying his long-term Australian girlfriend, international woman master Arianne Caoili. The couple married in the ancient Armenian Saghmsovank Monastery. Aronian's huge popularity in his homeland was confirmed by the presence of Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan who was the best man at the ceremony.

INTERNET: NAKAMURA DEFEATS KARJAKIN

Hikaru Nakamura advanced to the final of Chess.com Speed Chess Championship by defeating Sergey Karjakin after a very close match that ended at 16½:13½. At the beginning of January, Nakamura will face Magnus Carlsen in what will be a replay of last year's final match of the same competition, held under a different name – GM Blitz Battle. Previously Carlsen knocked out another Russian, Alexander Grischuk.

JENNIFER YU WINS BRONZE
AT THE WORLD JUNIOR U20

15-year-old American Jennifer Yu won the bronze medal at the World Junior Championship, held in Italy. In the last round, Jennifer declined a draw offered by her direct rival as only a win would enable her to claim another title. However, it was top-seeded Zhansaya Abdumalik of Kazakhstan who eventually won this fearsome battle and thereby also the gold medal. Abdumalik finished with 9½ pts out of 11 rounds, followed by Paramzina from Russia with 8½ and Yu with 8 pts. The Open section was won by Aryan Tari from Norway. The other two US representatives finished their tournaments with a positive score – Awonder Liang with 7/11 and Emily Nguyen with 6/11.

BURKE'S ANOTHER STEP
TOWARDS GM TITLE

After having scored his first GM norm at the Philadelphia Open in July, 16-year-old John Burke from New Jersey then convincingly won the St. Louis GM Invitational with an undefeated 6/9, thus adding another GM norm to his account. John holds a very interesting record being the youngest player ever to cross the 2600 ELO mark, at the age of 14, so it can rightly be said that it is only a matter of time before US Chess will have one more teenage GM.

LONDON TO BECOME
CHESS CAPITAL IN 2018

London is the chosen host-city for the World Championship Match 2018. World champion Magnus Carlsen will defend the title against the yet-to-be-decided challenger during the period 9–28 November. The prize fund will be the same as it was for the previous match held in New York: €1 million. The challenger will be known after the Candidates Tournament in Berlin, which will take place from 10–28 March with the participation of Karjakin, Aronian, Ding Liren, Mamedyarov, Grischuk, So, Caruana and Kramnik.



LETTER from the EDITOR

A KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR

While the professional tournament circuit undoubtedly brings together the cream of world chess, these events often look far too similar because the same grandmasters are playing each other all the time. I think what the public would really

like to see is the inclusion of new names in the hope of witnessing shock results and giant-killing acts, the bigger the better! In reality, what we rarely see is elite grandmasters competing against hometown players whose chess rating is far lower than those of the big guys. Indeed we might even say that it is only through looking closely at such encounters that the general public can fully appreciate just how good the top players are and admire their broad range of capabilities.

I had already previously heard such views repeatedly expressed by others and it has led me to form my present opinion. If chess royalty would only come down from the Olympus once in a while and compete with mere mortals, they would enter a world of wild and woolly chess where fire is frequently met with fire and exciting chess abounds. Here detailed opening preparation of variations 25 moves deep will not count for much against a swashbuckling opponent who delights in the challenge of daredevil lines such as the Budapest or Danish Gambit!

And this is why Magnus Carlsen's recent participation in the Isle of Man Masters means so much. It showed his willingness to engage at grass roots level. It also showed courage – and that courage paid off!

Magazines have the advantage over instant reportage in that they can provide a more in-depth approach but, on the other hand, the disadvantage of being a rather slow form of media. So, although we decided to celebrate the World Champion's victory in the Manx Masters on our cover, we also had to take into account that Magnus would close the chess season with a win in the London Classic. That was Fabiano Caruana's Christmas present! Then again we should hastily add that Magnus can take comfort in the fact



that he was overall winner of the highly prestigious and richly rewarded "Grand Tour".

Incidentally, the recurring opinion of our readers is that over the past year Magnus has shown just how "resilient" he is, and we could only agree: he is truly a man of steel. Not always "brilliant", but nevertheless securely clad in his suit of shining armor.

There is even more excitement in store for 2018, as it is the year in which both the Candidates Tournament and the World Championship Match will be staged. Will this result in glory for one of the American trio: Fabiano Caruana, Wesley So and Hikaru Nakamura?

As for the ACM, our New Year's resolution will be to publish more features on local American chess – from coast to coast! Now we are truly an independent magazine, our focus is much clearer and we have time to reflect and delve deeper.

For example, in the present issue we are very pleased to be able to include an article submitted by enthusiastic members of the Minnesota chess community and we hope this will encourage others to showcase chess happenings from their States too. So please accept our invitation to do just that!

Furthermore, you will notice that more and more young US players are annotating their games in ACM. Indeed it may be the first opportunity for many of these promising talents to present their games to a wider public as examples of their chess prowess. It goes without saying that we want to support the advancement of a whole new generation of players who have emerged in the wake of the many successes of the leading American grandmasters.

I wish you Happy Holidays and lots of good chess in 2018!

Josip Asik, *Editor-in-Chief*

ALL THREE AMERICANS SUCCESSFUL IN MARATHON MATCHES
AS WELL AS THE WORLD CHAMPION

★★★ SHOWDOWN ★★★ IN SAINT LOUIS!



Wesley So vs. Leiner Dominguez, St. Louis Showdown 2017.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

by **GM Mackenzie Molner**

Whenever Saint Louis holds a chess event, the world must take notice. The format for this tournament was quite unique. The top 3 Americans, Caruana, Nakamura, and Wesley So, as well as Magnus Carlsen, faced off against other top players in a series of quick play matches. The first 10 games of each match were rapid and the last 20 were all blitz games. I've taken one game from each match to show the contrasts in play.

In

the first series, Nakamura squared off against Veselin Topalov of Bulgaria. Nakamura won the match in decisive fashion with a total score of 21-9. Quite an impressive performance from the rapid and blitz specialist!

Next up was the match between Fabiano Caruana and Alexander Grischuk. Grischuk is no slouch in rapid play and some might have even considered him the favorite. Indeed he held a one point lead in the match going into the final round of play, but Fabiano was able to pull off a massive 8½-3½ score in 5 minute games to win the match with a decent cushion.

Wesley was up next, facing off with Lenier Dominguez, a former World Blitz Chess Champion. Wesley did not get off to a good start. Dominguez won both the g/30 and g/20 segments of the match and was off to a 3 point lead in the match going into g/10 and g/5. But then Wesley turned the tables completely, dominating both faster time controls, winning the match 17-13.

Finally, Magnus was up against Ding Liren, an impressive young force from China. Ding recently finished in second place at the 2017 World Cup, just behind Levon Aronian. I expected this to be a close match but the World Champion had other ideas and won with a ridiculous 22½-7½ score!

I've been a fan of St. Louis' previous experiments with fast chess and in my opinion it's nice to see them putting on other fun events for the chess world to witness. Opening theory and preparation have less of an impact, which allows a great deal of exciting chess. Hopefully the games I have picked out will convince you of the same thing!



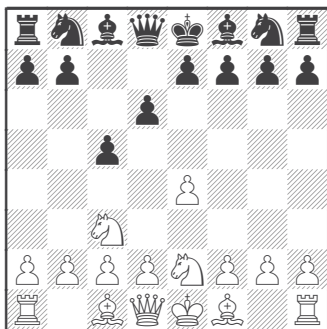
▲ Fabiano Caruana, St. Louis Showdown 2017. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

B25

Fabiano Caruana	2799
Alexander Grischuk	2782

St. Louis Showdown G/5

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3!? d6 3.♘ge2!?



Fabiano is not one to dodge theoretical battles but given the time control, it's no surprise to see him play something unusual. This particular move order intrigues me. It makes it difficult for

Black to play Najdorf setups that Grischuk usually enjoys without making a small concession if White heads for a closed Sicilian.

3...♘f6 Now Black is committed to playing a closed Sicilian with the knight on f6. Most people prefer to have it on e7 in these setups.

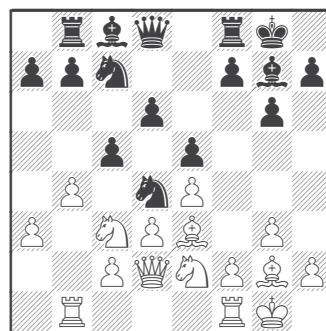
4.g3 g6 5.♗g2 ♗g7 6.d3 ♘c6 7.0-0 ♗b8 8.a3!? Indicating early queenside intentions. 8.f4 is another very common way of playing. After 8...0-0 9.h3 ♘d7 10.g4 b5 11.♘g3 b4 12.♘ce2 the battle lines are clearly drawn. White will push on the kingside and Black will try to make their play elsewhere count for more.

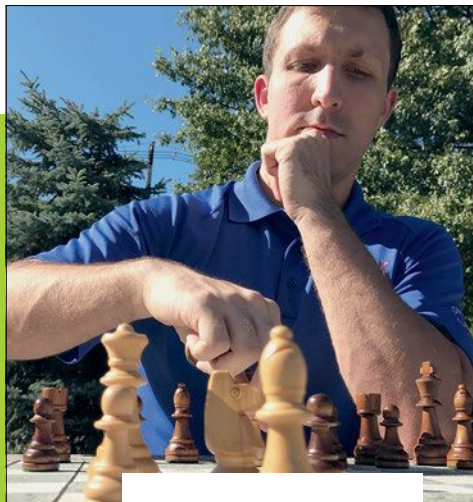
8...0-0 8...b5 seems to be perfectly fine here, e.g. 9.b4!? cxb4 10.axb4 ♘xb4 11.♗xa7 ♘c6 12.♗a2 b4 13.♘d5 0-0 14.♗d2=.

9.♗b1 ♘e8!? There were of course

many other choices, which in a blitz game can actually be a problem!.

10.b4 ♘c7 11.♗e3 ♘d4 12.♗d2 e5?!





Mackenzie Molner

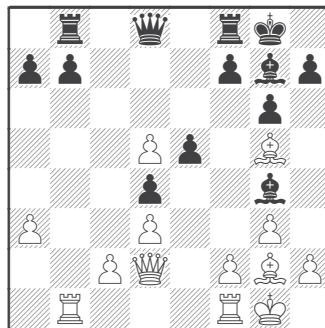
is an American grandmaster, residing in New Jersey. He has been US Open Co-Champion and competed in the U.S. Championship. Mac is now a full-time chess coach, teaching school programs, group classes, and private lessons.

The beginning of Black's problems. After this move, Black has to constantly deal with the potential threat of a kingside pawn wedge. Though there are then several options, 12...b6 is the computer's top choice. It keeps Black flexible by solidifying the queenside, whilst leaving open the possibility of developing his queen's bishop on the long diagonal.

13.bxc5 13.f4!± Forward first is the best policy. If this move works now, why not play it? 13...f6 (13...dxe2+ 14.dxe2±) 14.fxe5 Now White can change plans and open the position before Black is properly set up. 14...fxe5 15.g5 dxe2+ 16.dxe2 fxf1+ 17.fxf1± d7 18.bxc5 dxc5 19.dxc3

and White has a pleasantly superior position.

13...dxc5 14.d5?! dxd5 15.exd5 g4 16.dxd4 cxd4 17.g5

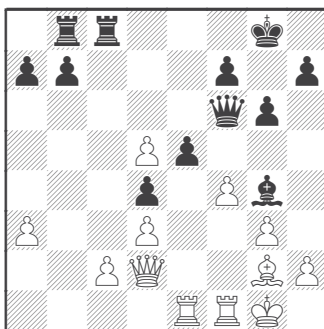


17...f6? Unfortunately, Black errs and makes a massive mistake. After this move, it is very hard for Grischuk to recover. If he had instead played 17...f6!, he would have solved all of his problems. In fact this feels like such a natural move, considering that it forces off the dark-squared bishops and leaves Black with a nice light-squared bishop. After 18.g6 h6 g6xh6 19.g6xh6 d6 Black has very little to worry about.

18.gxf6 fxf6 19.f4! The threat is simply to play f3e1 with intense pressure down the center files. In fact Black can't keep the center from collapsing. The tactical problem of having the queen on f6, in line with the white rook, is the main issue.

19...fxc8? Although White is much better after 19...d7! 20.f3e1 exf4 21.f3xf4 g5 22.f3b4, it's not over yet.

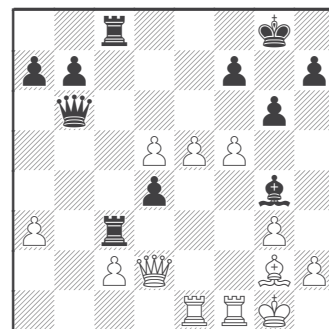
20.f3e1!



20...e4 Despite cleaning up White's

pawn structure, and allowing a massive center, this is perhaps Black's best chance. Following 20...exf4 21.f3xf4 g5 22.h4 f3h6 23.f3f2 Black would be faced with the unenviable task of dealing with the dual threats against the bishop on g4 and pawn on f7.

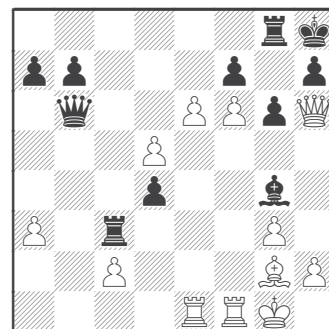
21.dxe4 f3c3 22.f5! f3bc8 23.e5 f3b6



24.f6? 24.e6! is a cleaner win, e.g. 24...f3xc2 25.exf7+ f3xf7 26.f3xg6+, although the move played in the game gets the job done as well.

24...f3h8? The better 24...f3e3! can still be met by 25.e6!, e.g. 25...f3xe6 26.f3b1! f3c5 27.f3f2!.

25.f3h6 f3g8 26.e6



A beautiful final position. What a dominating pair of pawns!

Black resigned

The following players need no introduction. Without a doubt, I expected them to deliver the most combative chess out of any of the matchups and they did not disappoint. Nakamura would eventually win the match in convincing fashion and this game was one of his nicest victories.



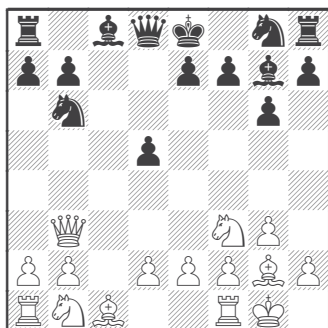
A11

Hikaru Nakamura 2780

Veselin Topalov 2749

St. Louis Showdown G/5

1.♟f3 d5 2.g3 g6 3.♙g2 ♙g7 4.c4 c6
5.♞a4 ♜d7 6.cxd5 ♜b6 7.♞b3 cxd5
8.0-0

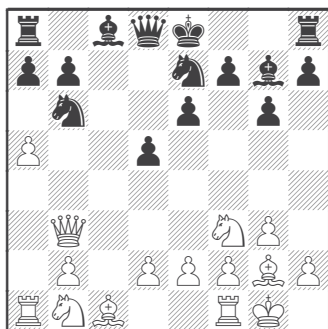


A rather quiet opening by these players' standards. Being a Gruenfeld player too, I find myself in this kind of position from time to time. Even in a quiet position like this, in the Gruenfeld it's always important to think actively.

8...e6 8...e5! was a good chance for Black to take control of the center. Black would then aim to play ...♜e7-c6 followed by ...0-0 with a perfectly reasonable position. Given Topalov's active nature, I am surprised he didn't play this.

9.a4!? 9.d4 ♜e7 is another reasonable way for the game to continue.

9...♜e7 10.a5?



Nakamura's ambitious and provocative play is rewarded after his opponent's poor response, but objectively Black is doing well after this move.

10...♜d7? Once again Black needs to think actively. With 10...♜c4! he would get excellent play against the newly formed weakness on a5. After 11.♞a2 ♜c6 12.d3 ♜4xa5 13.b4 it looks like Black is oddly tangled up on the queenside but Black has a strong riposte: 13...♞f6! ♞ when he has more than enough play to make up for the knight dilemma.

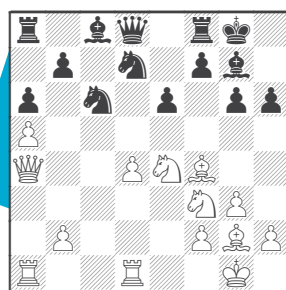
11.d4 11.♞a3!?

11...♜c6 12.♞a4?! I like 12.♞a3! the best. It causes Black the most concrete problems. 12...♜xd4?! (After 12...♞e7!? 13.♞xe7+ ♜xe7 White is better here due to Black's weak dark squares. White will look to get the bishop to a3 in the near future.) 13.♜xd4 ♜xd4 14.♜c3± ♜c5 15.b4 ♜e7 16.♜h6±.

12...a6?! After 12...0-0! Black has nothing to fear. Topalov should just finish his development.

13.♙g5! ♞c7 14.♙f4 ♞d8 15.♜c3 0-0 16.e4! Nakamura seizes the initiative and does not take his foot off the gas.

16...dxe4 17.♜xe4 h6 18.♞fd1! Increasing his lead in development and building up a lot of energy, soon to be released by a central breakthrough.



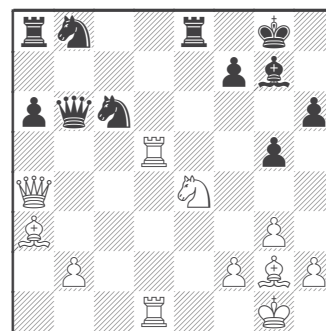
18...g5? Better is 18...♜f6! 19.♜xf6+ ♞xf6. Even though this position is still much better for White, it would have limited the damage. After the game continuation there is very little Black can do.

19.♙d6 ♞e8 20.♜e5! ♜db8 If 20...♜dx5?! then 21.dxe5 and Black will be smothered, especially with ♜e4-c5 coming up.

21.♙a3 ♙d7 21...♞xa5 was the most testing defense. 22.♞xa5 ♜xa5 23.♜d6 ♞f8 24.♜f5! This nice shot keeps a winning advantage for White. 24...exf5 25.♜xf8 ♜xf8 26.♞xa5+.

22.♜xd7 ♞xd7 23.d5 23.♜d6 is also crushing. 23...♞d8 24.d5 wins.

23...exd5 24.♞xd5 ♞c7 25.♞ad1 b5 26.axb6 ♞xb6

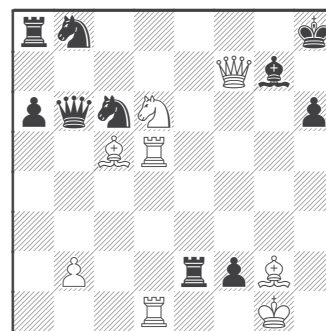


27.h4 A strong undermining move that leaves Black's kingside in a shambles.

27...gxh4 28.♜d6 ♞e2 29.♞f4 Now we can see the benefit of White's h2-h4 idea. The f4 square is free for use and Black will have no way to deal with White's kingside superiority.

29...hxg3 30.♞xf7+ This move can hardly be criticized, but White did have a potent alternative in 30.♞xg3!, when the threat is ♜f5. Then if 30...♞e6 31.♜c8 ♞b7 32.♜e7+!! An incredible move. One example of its devastating effect is 32...♞xe7 33.♞d8+ ♜xd8 34.♞xd8+ ♜h7 35.♞d3+ leading to mate.

30...♜h8 31.♙c5 gxf2+



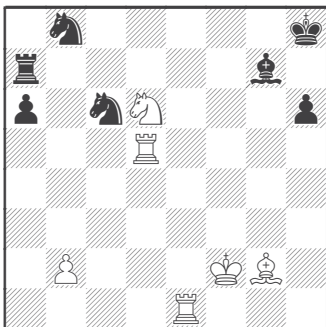
32.♙xf2? The cold blooded 32.♜f1! would have ended all resistance. The



▲ Hikaru Nakamura vs. Veselin Topalov,
St. Louis Showdown 2017.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

computer has no problem pointing it out, although it's not the most natural move for a human, especially in a five minute game. Then after 32...♖e1+ follows 33.♙xf2! ♖xb2+ 34.♖d2 ♖c3 35.♙e4 when this bizarre pawnless position shows the power of White's active pieces.

32...♖xf2+ 33.♖xf2 ♖xf2 34.♙xf2 ♖a7 35.♖e1



35...♙e7 This makes White's task easier. Better resistance could have been offered by either 35...♙xb2 or 35...♖e7!.

36.♖d3 ♙bc6 37.♙c8 ♖c7 38.♙xe7

♙xe7 39.♖d8+ ♙h7 40.♙e4+ ♙g6 41.♖g1 ♖f7+ 42.♙e2 ♖e7 43.♙d3 Facing material losses...

...Black resigned

B12

Leinier Dominguez 2739

Wesley So 2788

St. Louis Showdown g/10 2017

1.e4 c6 The Caro-Kann isn't a frequent guest in elite tournaments but anything with surprise value is a serious consideration in fast time controls like these.

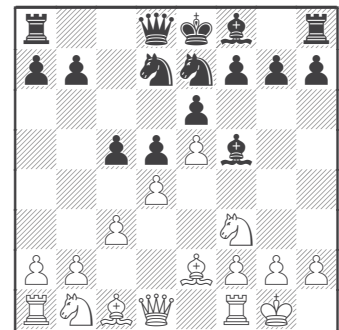
2.d4 d5 3.e5 I have played this line many times myself. Nowadays, it's considered one of the best tries for an advantage against the Caro.

3...♙f5 3...c5!? is an interesting way to change the dynamic of the game. This advance opens the position, enabling Black to avoid the slower positional struggle that is seen in the game. 4.dxc5 is a common response when both 4...e6 and 4...♙c6 are serious possibilities.

4.♙f3 e6 5.♙e2 The variation known as the Short system.

5...♙e7 6.c3!? 6.0-0 is the main move. White will choose a plan according to whatever setup Black chooses. Black can aim for ...♙d7 and ...♙c8, ...h6 and ...g5, or also early ...c5 breaks. The position is full of possibilities. 6...♙d7 (6...c5!?) 7.♙bd2 ♙g6 is common, with the idea of ...♙f5 or even the provocative 7...h6!?, intending ...g5 in the near future. On the other hand, 7...♙c8 is much more solid.

6...♙d7 7.0-0 c5

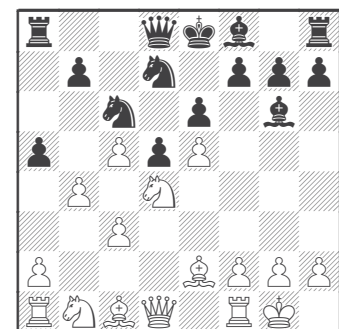


8.dxc5! A typical reaction to Black's central break. White can now aim for a queenside pawn wedge with a subsequent b2-b4 or utilize the newly cleared d4-square for piece activity.

8...♙c6 If I were playing Black I would probably opt for 8...♙xc5! here. This simple approach prevents White from getting a pawn storm going, e.g. 9.♙d4 ♙g6 10.f4 ♙c6 11.♙e3 ♙e4 12.♙b3 ♙e7 13.♙1d2 with a playable position for both sides.

9.b4! 9.♙d4!? deserves attention but Leinier handles the position very well at this point.

9...a5 10.♙d4! ♙g6 10...axb4 doesn't solve the problems: 11.♙xf5 exf5 12.cxb4±.



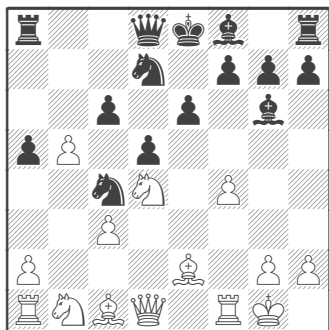


11.b5? White would be playing for the maximum with 11.f4!, since if given time he will completely consolidate his extra pawn with moves like a2-a3, finish his development and be left with an extra pawn and more space. It's up to Black to stop this plan, and right now he can't. 11...axb4 12.♖xc6 bxc6 13.cxb4 ♙xb1 is the most direct attempt to counter White's idea but his lead in development and quality of pieces would still ensure a large advantage: 14.♙xb1 ♙xa2± 15.♙e3 ♙e7 16.♙a1 ♙a8 17.♙xa2 ♙xa2 18.♙d2 ♙xd2 19.♙xd2 0-0 20.♙a1 and White is on the verge of winning.

11...♖ce5 The calm move 11...♖a7!? needs to be met by a quick central blow: 12.c4!±. The alternative 12.b6?! is an important variation but not as good, e.g. 12...♖c6 13.♖b5 ♙c8 14.♖c7+ ♙xc7 15.bxc7 ♙xc7 and the exchange sacrifice has given Black good counterplay.

12.f4 12.c6! bxc6 13.bxc6±.

12...♖c4 13.c6! bxc6

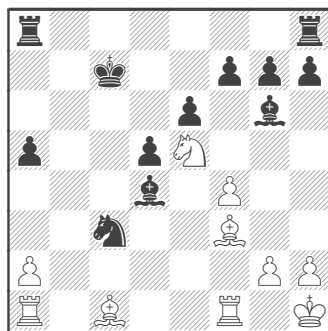


14.bxc6 White can play for a very interesting pawn sacrifice here by 14.♙xc4! dxc4 15.f5 ♙xf5 16.♖xf5 exf5 17.♙e1+ ♙e7 18.♙a3 c5. All of these moves are forced. 19.♙e2 ♖f8 This is the most sensible defense, aiming to establish a strong blockade on the e6 square. However, White can meet this well with the straightforward 20.♖d2 ♖e6 21.♖xc4 0-0 22.♙ad1

when, despite the pawn minus, he obtains great play. His intention is to continue ♖e3, followed by ♖xf5 or ♖d5, with tremendous coordination and activity.

14...♖f6 15.♙a4 ♙c5!± 16.♖a3?! ♖e4 17.c7+ ♙d7 18.♙xd7+ ♖xd7 19.♖xc4 ♖xc3! 20.♖e5+ Unfortunately after this move there is no chance to save the game. 20.♙e3 offered the most resistance, although in the long run Black should win after 20...♙xd4 21.♙xd4 ♖xe2+ 22.♖f2 ♖xd4 etc.

20...♖xc7 21.♖h1 ♙xd4 22.♙f3



22...♖e4 23.♙a3 ♖f2+ 24.♙xf2 ♙xa1 25.♙f1 ♙xe5 26.fxe5 ♖d7 A short but action packed game with chances for both sides!

White resigned

COO

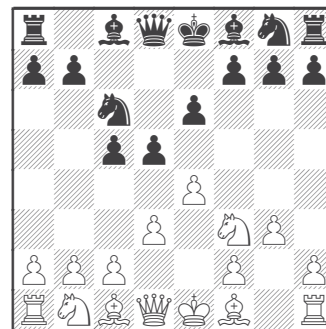
Magnus Carlsen	2837
Ding Liren	2774

St. Louis Showdown g/10, 2017

1.e4 c5 Ding very rarely plays the Sicilian. His most common openings are the Caro-Kann and king pawn defences with 1...e5.

2.♖f3 e6 3.d3 As so often, Carlsen opts for an offbeat variation that may contain poison and heads for a non-theoretical debate.

3...♖c6 4.g3 d5



5.♙e2!? 5.♖bd2 is very similar and in some ways less committal. It is more conventional to retain total flexibility for



Wesley So vs. Leinier Dominguez, ▶
St. Louis Showdown 2017.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

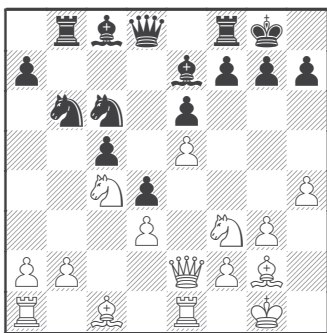


▲ Magnus Carlsen vs. Ding Liren, St. Louis Showdown 2017. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

the queen and use White's kingside rook to support the advance of the e-pawn.

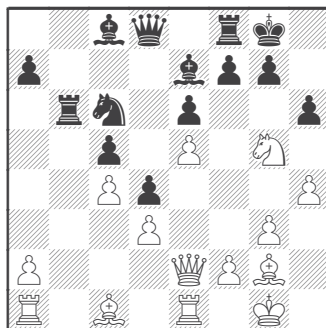
5...♖f6 6.♗g2 ♗e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.e5 ♘d7 9.c4 With the white knight still on b1, able to go to c3, this move increases in effectiveness.

9...d4 10.♖e1 ♖b8 11.h4! b5 12.cxb5 ♖xb5 13.♘a3 ♖b8 14.♘c4 ♘b6



15.b3 It's hard to criticize Carlsen's choice because it feels so natural, but 15.♘g5! looks like the stronger choice. After 15...♘c4 16.♗xc6 ♗xg5 17.♗xg5! (17.hxg5!? ♘b6 18.♗e4 ♗b7=) 17...♗c7 18.♗e4 ♘xe5 19.♗f4 f6 20.♖ac1, despite being a pawn down, White's chances are better due to the pressure he exerts against Black's weaknesses along the open lines.

15...♘c4 16.bxc4 ♖b6 17.♘g5 h6



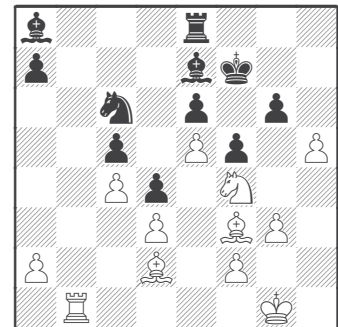
18.♘h3? 18.♗xc6! is very strong here, with the main point being 18...♖xc6 19.♗e4! and Black can't deal with the double attack. Also, even after the better 18...hxg5 19.♗e4 ♗b7 20.♗h5 ♗xe4 21.♖xe4, White gears up for a huge attack.

18...♗b7? 18...♗d7! is a key nuance from Black's point of view. It's quite clear that White will be pushing on the kingside but not immediately obvious why the bishop belongs on d7. However, after 19.♗g4 ♗h8, if White then continues as he did in the game by 20.♗h5 (20.♗xh6 gxh6 21.♗h5 ♗g7 22.♗g4+ ♗h8=), he will be met by the strong response 20...♗e8! which halts White, e.g. 21.♗xh6? f5!-+.

19.♗g4 Now White's

attack is overwhelming.

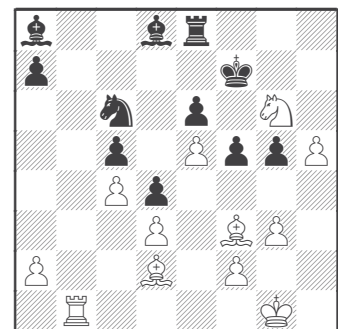
19...♗h8 20.♗h5 ♗e8 21.♗xh6 f5 22.♗xe8 ♖xe8 23.♗d2+ ♗g8 24.♘f4 ♗f7 25.♗f3 g6 26.♖ab1 ♖xb1 27.♖xb1 ♗a8 28.h5



28...g5? After 28...♘xe5! 29.hxg6+ ♗f6 30.♗xa8 ♖xa8 31.♗g2 White still has a very large advantage, but this would be Black's best hope.

29.♘g6 Black's position is now hopeless. White's better pieces and extra material will be decisive.

29...♗d8



30.♖b5! g4 31.♗g2 ♗b6 32.a4 and Ding threw in the towel. A very nice game by Carlsen, which shows the power of offbeat openings in fast chess!

Black resigned ■

CHAMPIONS SHOWDOWN, SAINT LOUIS 9th to 14th November 2017

Fabiano Caruana	17	13	Alexander Grischuk
Hikaru Nakamura	21	9	Veselin Topalov
Wesley So	17	13	Leinier Dominguez
Magnus Carlsen	22½	7½	Ding Liren



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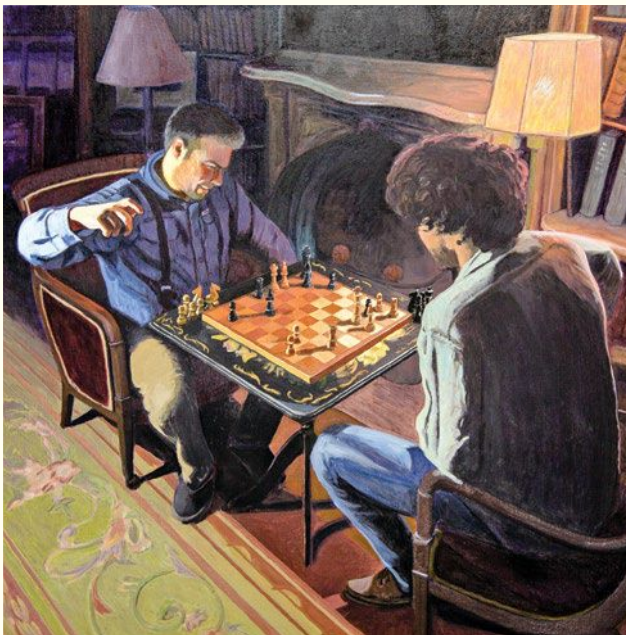
W.H.K. Pollock. *A Chess Biography with 524 Games*. Olimpiu G. Urcan and John S. Hilbert. 2017, \$65 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 508pp., 68 illustrations, diagrams, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, 978-0-7864-5868-4. Englishman Pollock (1859–1896) played in many important American events of the 1800s and numerous matches against strong players. “Wonderful...superb” — *Chessbook Reviews*; “A perfect marriage of subject, author and publisher. Open at random and be entertained.” — Jonathan Manley, editor, *Kingpin Chess Magazine*; **HONORABLE MENTION, BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD** — *Chess Journalists of America*.

H.E. Bird. *A Chess Biography with 1,198 Games*. Hans Renette. 2016, \$75 library binding (21.9 × 28.5 cm), 608pp., 1,198 games, 376 diagrams, 85 illustrations, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7578-0. No 19th century player had a longer career — nor more slashing attack games — than Henry Edward Bird (1829–1908). A detailed account of his personal life and vigorous feats. **BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD** — *Chess Journalists of America*.

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Go For It! 30" × 30" OIL ON LINEN, LOUIS MUNROE 2016 (dwaynesuteno@gmail.com)



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His technical play is his greatest strength. He plays accurately in dry positions, sometimes proceeding correctly until his opponent makes extremely small inaccuracies that yield winning chances for Magnus.

David Milliern, *Newton, MA*

His strength is that he's the best. Hard to dispute.

Mark Chandler, *Laurel, MD*

I think that the greatest strength Magnus has is indeed "his" strength, not only in classic but in rapid and blitz also. Overall is the constancy he has in every tournament he plays, if he doesn't win, he is rarely placed other than 2nd. An example of this is the Grand Chess Tour standings.

Tito Tomey, *Peru*

Despite a disappointing classical year (for his standards) his showing in rapid and blitz really distinguishes him from everyone else! Crushing Ding Liren, his ability to handle through complications and his exceptional technique sets him apart from all the others!

Abdalla Khallouf, *Lebanon*

Magnus Carlsen was as always the complete chess player in 2017. There is an old saying, "If it ain't broke don't fix it". Magnus might tweak his game, but he will still be the World Chess Champion until someone says different. Dilly, dilly.

Manuel Infante, *Oklahoma City, OK*

His greatest strength is the fact that, unlike many of his rivals, he almost always plays for a win and he eschews draw offers in positions where most of his competitors would propose or accept one. It's no coincidence that he shares this trait with another great champion, Bobby Fischer. His overall strengths include his uncanny feel for position and his ability to sense when and where a position offers chances to press for a win.

Richard Bowes, *Canada*

His tenacity for outplaying his opponents in equal or worse positions – rather than overpowering them with theoretical novelties.

Brian Hulse, *Austin, TX*

His ability to get a position and outplay the best in the world in the middle and endgames. He goes for solid openings and rarely tries or falls for tricks in the opening.

Casey Jones, *Navarre, FL*

Well, he seems to be relaxing and yet he is still very strong. I can only imagine what would happen if he finds a rival that would push him to do his best. He really is not having to put his very best forward yet.

Rick Romero, *Lancaster, CA*

He didn't have a perfect year, but what world champion does? Until he is beaten in a World

His year wasn't perfect, but Magnus the King clearly remained on top of the chess world. In your opinion what was his greatest strength in 2017 and what are his overall strengths that keep him at the pinnacle of chess?

Championship match, he is still the World Champion.

David W. Cofer, *Irving, TX*

Magnus is a fighter. He rarely offers or accepts early draws, instead relishing the chance to grind an opponent down in an endgame.

Lucas Anderson, *Houston, TX*

He makes very few mistakes and presses until the "last drop of play".

Philippe Chappé, *France*

He's a natural a la Capablanca.

Tony Wong, *Glendale, CA*

Focus and the ability to refocus after a difficult match. Magnus is not afraid of match play.

Charles Whatley,
Warner Robins, GA

He never gives up and he plays many openings making it difficult to prepare for him.

Dan O'Hanlon, *Huntington, WV*





Magnus is tenacious. Even if he is out of form, he never quits. Just like Fischer he will continue to play for the win.

Christopher Baumgartner,
Des Plaines, IL

His strength is finding practical chances and avoiding theory. He also is a tenacious defender and rarely loses.

Alexander Chua, *Houston, TX*

Magnus has the patience to wait for a "mistake" by his opponent, and the skill and experience to maximize that minor error into a win.

Leo Feret, *Gilford, NH*

His ability to create small advantages during a game which typically will eventually grind down his opponents.

Sean O'Neill, *Ireland*

Like all elite athletes Magnus has an incredible drive to win which makes up for some down days. But he is also so well-rounded as a player, it seems that he doesn't miss anything.

Michael Brooks, *Newaygo, MI*

Magnus's greatest strength in the year 2017 was his ability to fight throughout the whole game.

Curtis Kramer, *Carlisle, PA*

Magnus consistently shows he is resilient, and you can count on him bouncing back quickly after a disappointing result. His physical shape seems to be stronger than his competitors.

Paul Swaney, *Falls Church, VA*

He is Karpovian in his positional play. Varies his openings to get a playable position where he challenges his opponents to play 50-60 good moves.

Kenneth Calitri, *Mahwah, NJ*

I was impressed with his resiliency. After a wobbly World Championship match and, by Carlsen's standards, a disaster at Altibox Norway, you began to hear rumblings that perhaps Magnus had lost his touch. But then he bounced back with a dominant performance at the Paris leg of the Grand Chess Tour.

Eric Strachan, *Tucson, AZ*

His stability is ahead of his competitors as well as his ability to utilize small advantages and turn equal positions to victories.

Carlsen's endgame technique is just great.

Tommi Franssila, *Finland*

Consistency and confidence.

Christopher Moscinski,
Bronx, NY

Patience and fighting till the end...trying to squeeze as much as he can from any position...

Sunil Vaidya, *India*

Conversion of very small advantages into wins.

Jonathan Adams, *Australia*

Persistence always pays off.

Larry Behrendt, *Ewing, NJ*

Coolness.

Axel Eger, *Germany*

Determination to win!

Thom Fallis, *Tucker, GA*

His development of a plan during the late middlegame into the endgame.

Mark Capron, *Iowa City, IO*

He's better than the rest.

Dennis Maher, *Niles, OH*

Continued self-confidence even when he was struggling.

Mehran Divanbaigyzand,
McLean, VA

Focus, depth of knowledge and persistence!

Jose O. Rodriguez, *Acworth, GA*

He can pull out the results when required.

Alan Reed, *Poland*

His drive to win and fight.

Michel Behna, *Torrance, CA*

Endgame technique, willpower, tenacity.

Oswaldo Olivo, *Bellevue, WA*

His greatest strength in 2017 is his determination

that he is the best player in the world. He has the best sense in chess compared with all his rivals.

Patrick Tang, *Plymouth, MN*

Magnus has a strong intuition that he uses to obtain unbalanced positions that he can convert to wins. He can convert small advantages into won games because of strong endgame technique.

Dan Meyo, *Parma Heights, OH*

His utter unpredictability. He seems to play any opening and succeed.

Edward A. Frumkin, *New York, NY*

The ability to rebound from difficulties on the chess board. He has won just about everything he entered lately.

W. S. Evans, *Louisville, KY*

Magnus plays a very cautious strategic game trying not to be too aggressive against top chess players who defend well and love attacking. He remains methodical and seems to improve his positional play before embarking on ambitious attacking plans. He truly remains a chess genius with great vision across the board and ability to calculate many moves ahead.

Cesar G. Lachica Jr., *Santa Clarita, CA*

It is no secret that Carlsen is a genius at chess. I would like to suggest that he also works very hard at the game. He is constantly learning about the game and is willing to apply what he has learned in practice. To experiment, even. Which suggests why his results had been uneven in 2017.

Howard Wong, *Singapore*

His greatest strength in 2017 was his ability to remain confident and win the Isle of Man Masters tournament in convincing fashion, despite substandard results at various classical tournaments throughout the year (especially Altibox Norway Chess and his early elimination at the World Cup). His overall strengths that keep him at number one include his tenacity and his strong will to win, which enables him to finish near the top of the leaderboard, even when his form is a little bit off.

Kevin Wilson, *San Diego, CA*

I don't think Magnus acquired any special new traits in 2017 – not that he needs any. This year has not been particularly demanding for him as he has not had to defend his title as was the case last year in New York. His well known abilities to steer the game forcefully from the early stage towards positions he likes playing, fast calculation resting on boundless self-confidence, faith in physical fitness rather than blinding engine advice is going to foster the fascination of his fans for a long time to come..

GM Sarunas Sulskis, *Lithuania*

Three Americans – Caruana, So and Nakamura are nipping at Magnus's heels and each hopes to catch up with him. Which of these three is the greatest threat to him in 2018 and what do they need to demonstrate to capture the world champion's crown?



Fabiano Caruana.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

Fabi has the chess "stuff" to be a true threat to Magnus. So's best strengths do not match up with Magnus and Nakamura simply has a mental disadvantage because of their record against each other. But you never know, Naka is still young!
Michael Brooks, Newaygo, MI

All three players have the capability to be the next World Chess Champion, but they lack the consistency and that little extra edge that would place them in a position to capture the World Chess Championship. They have to demonstrate a tremendous hunger and deeper inner desire to take their game to the next level to deliver a successful challenge to Magnus for the World Title.

Manuel Infante, Oklahoma City, OK

I believe So has a great positional ability but he will need to apply Tal and Alekhine dynamics to his play. Nakamura will have to study the games of Rubinstein, Capablanca, Smyslov to go toe to toe in a classic match with Carlsen. His ability to attack is awesome but a very close study of these great players, particularly the middle game and endings will help him fight for the highest title if it were to ever take place. Caruana is a very good overall player but I haven't studied him much so I can't comment.

Rick Romero, Lancaster, CA

So – I don't think so, not sure he is a killer as Spassky would say. Caruana is the main threat – if he can win games not just play to stay with the pack, which means risk losing more often. Naka continues to develop; becoming more solid. He has shown he can win and can win a game coming from behind – he has a dynamism others don't – latent energy in all his positions.

Kenneth Calitri, Mahwah, NJ

All of them have capabilities to catch Magnus. My guess is that Wesley So is the greatest threat to Carlsen in 2018. He just needs to further sharpen his own playing style and to put more effort into endgame technique. He has great potential to fight successfully for the World Championship title.

Tommi Fransson, Finland

Nakamura is the greatest threat at this time. Eventually, So might be a threat, but not yet. To capture the crown, they will have to demonstrate they can beat Magnus on a regular basis, not just once in a while and not in blitz, rapid, or other faster time controls.

David W. Cofer, Irving, TX

So is the pack leader but cannot catch Magnus.

Tony Wong, Glendale, CA

Fabiano Caruana! His dynamic style of chess and world class preparation – thanks to his world class coach Rustam! – was the key in the last

If I had been asked this question three months ago, my answer would have been, unequivocally, Wesley So. But I think Caruana has an equally good chance of challenging Carlsen. They will have to take a page out of Karjakin's playbook and be prepared to defend tenaciously, especially in those endgame positions that appear equal, but rarely are when Magnus is on form.

Eric Strachan, Tucson, AZ

Wesley So seems like the biggest threat of the three to Magnus but he seems a few years away. I feel that Aronian and MVL are as much of a threat, if not more so. Who can be the most consistent?

Edward A. Frumkin, New York, NY

So seems the best choice of late. I think you have to go after Carlsen in all three phases of the game in every game. And play almost perfect attacking chess. Taking a defensive posture will fail.

W. S. Evans, Louisville, KY

Caruana is the greatest threat to Carlsen in 2018 and he needs to play flawlessly to capture the crown.

Patrick Tang, Plymouth, MN

I believe Wesley So, if he is in good form would be the greatest threat; after watching their game in the London Classic, it seemed to me that Wesley may be the better endgame player.

Curtis Kramer, Carlisle, PA

Caruana is the only player of the three who can show he can reliably beat Carlsen in classical chess. To win the championship, Caruana will need to channel Sinquefeld 2014 into the Candidates' Tournament, then prepare like a madman against the greatest match player of our era.

Lucas Anderson, Houston, TX

With Nakamura being my favorite player this is hard to say, but I do believe that only



▲ Wesley So.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.



Candidates as he was denied his chance due to the tiebreak rules adopted.

Abdalla Khallouf, Lebanon

Caruana. He needs to show more consistency though.

Alan Reed, Poland

Caruana. He needs consistency and relentlessness.

Michel Behna, Torrance, CA

So. Play better chess.

Dennis Maher, Niles, OH

Caruana — he needs to want the crown more than Magnus.

Christopher Moscinski, Bronx, NY

So — all round strength including top-class endgame.

Jonathan Adams, Australia

That is a tough one, but I would hazard a guess, Wesley So.

Larry Behrendt, Ewing, NJ

Caruana. He appears to get best results when playing Magnus.

Sean O'Neill, Ireland

So! No fear!

Axel Eger, Germany

Caruana...better nerves in tight situations.

Thom Fallis, Tucker, GA

Caruana. More consistency.

Mark Capron, Iowa City, IO

I think Caruana is the greatest threat to Magnus. He just needs to demonstrate a bit more consistency.

Richard Bowes, Canada

IMO, which shouldn't count for much, they each have aspects that could help them make a real challenge. Of the three, I'd have to go with So. He continues to be an enigma to me. What makes him a top 10 player? To challenge, he needs to find his creativity.

Mark Chandler, Laurel, MD

Nakamura's score against Carlsen hasn't been good. So I would rate him as the least

threatening of the three. I think So has the best chance to catch up with Carlsen. However, I think the next world champion will be someone from China or India.

Howard Wong, Singapore

I believe Wesley So would be a threat to Magnus in 2018. Wesley might not be great in blitz or rapid chess but he has great control and planning in classical games. He seems to be challenged enough to prove himself in 2018 and show why he was erstwhile No. 2 in the world.

Cesar G. Lachica Jr., Santa Clarita, CA

At this point, I think that Caruana is the greatest threat to Magnus. He came very close to winning the Candidates in 2016, so it's clear that he has what it takes. He puts in a lot of hard work preparing for his opponents, so he just needs to keep doing that, and play at a consistently high level. It would be great if Fabiano (or Wesley So) could win the Candidates tournament, and challenge Magnus for the world title in 2018!

Kevin Wilson, San Diego, CA

In terms of individual scores, the odds are stacked against Nakamura — like none of the other contenders. I personally favor So's chances of throwing down a gauntlet to Magnus. As a Christian, I admire his faith in God, which has transformed him from an ordinary Filipino boy to a glowing star of the chess world. Although he has lost his second place in the FIDE rating list, he is still firmly rooted in the top 10 and undoubtedly within striking distance. He should just continue praying, working and playing inspired chess, then he can finally glorify God when he wins the crown of crowns.

GM Sarunas Sulskis, Lithuania

Caruana probably has the best chance against Magnus. He has had some well-fought victories and, as he showed in the latest London Classic, he isn't afraid to play for a win.

Casey Jones, Navarre, FL

Caruana has the greatest opportunity for improvement, and thus is the greatest threat.

Leo Feret, Gifford, NH

So...focus and resilience. The path to becoming world champion requires mental toughness and the ability to refocus and forget tough matches.

Charles Whatley, Warner Robins, GA

Any opponent up against Magnus will have to dig deep, like water on a stone. Flashy tactics will just be deflected. It will be a battle of inches.

Christopher Baumgartner, Des Plaines, IL

Caruana — he seems to be mentally the strongest of the three, but to be honest I do not see anyone currently being a threat to Magnus.

Paul Swaney, Falls Church, VA

I believe Wesley So has the best chance to challenge

Magnus because of his opening knowledge and excellent middle game and endgame technique.

Dan Mayo, Parma Heights, OH

They are not threats to Magnus. So may have the greatest chance of the three to upset Carlsen and hold on to win the WC match.

Brian Hulse, Austin, TX

Caruana is the most dangerous. His opening preparation is excellent and he plays well in all positions including complicated battles.

Alexander Chua, Houston, TX

So, as he too makes very few mistakes. He is on the right track already and perhaps just needs a "little bit of poison" in his play.

Philippe Chappé, France

Caruana. It's just that simple. Caruana is capable of playing accurately enough to force Magnus to play more creatively.



▲ Hikaru Nakamura.
Photo by Lennart Ootes

Within the domain of creativity on the chessboard, as the greats of the past have learned, is both the fecund field of brilliancy and retrospective blunders. Caruana can outplay Magnus creatively, so long as he can play more accurately than he did against Karjakin in the final round of the Candidates.

David Milliern, Newton, MA

THE WORLD CHAMPION POWERS TO VICTORY

MAGNUS THE KING AMONG MERE MORTALS

by **GM Ivan Sokolov**



ver the last couple of years there has been a trend for the world's best open events to secure the entry of world class players.

Chess fans love this and watching the “aristocrats” fighting against the “plebs” definitely brings extra excitement to the chess arena.

The Isle of Man Open, sponsored by the American company “chess.com”, arguably the biggest chess internet portal in the world, staked 50,000 pounds sterling for the first prize and did its utmost – and succeeded! – to secure the participation of top class grandmasters. Moreover the unexpected early departure of Magnus Carlsen from the World Cup proved to be a lucky break for the organizers.

I spoke briefly to Magnus in Tbilisi, where I was engaged as a commentator, just after he had been eliminated. He sounded far less upset than one would have expected and said “Yeah...I might play IOM”.

At the Qatar Open, some time ago, Carlsen was successful, but a new event is always a new challenge and everyone was curious how he would fare.

Something special – unusual we might say – about the IOM Open is its first round “random pairing”. Yes, you got it right... The first round pairing is totally random and Caruana had to play Kramnik!

What makes Carlsen very different from all other reigning world champions is his willingness to step into the arena “unprotected” to show that he really is simply the best, better than anyone...

All the other world champions not only took great care as to which events they would play, they would also be choosy about the format and sometimes would even have their say about which other players were to be invited – so they could avoid their “difficult” opponents.

This approach of the “unprotected” champion being ready to fight the “plebs” actually backfired on Magnus at the World Cup, but it seems he couldn't wait to try it again!

The IOM Masters reached its climax in the penultimate round with the pairing, Caruana vs. Carlsen! Caruana came well prepared and produced a strong novelty with which he reached a promising position.

The crucial moment came on White's 22nd move. Instead of continuing with his aggressive and active play, Caruana, for no objective reason, started to retreat, thereby taking the path of least resistance and soon landing in a lost position.

I did not live in the time of Fischer, but of course I have looked closely at his games. In doing so I found there is some resemblance to what is happening today with Carlsen. Inexplicably, now, as then, even the world's best players somehow just lose their way against the world champion.



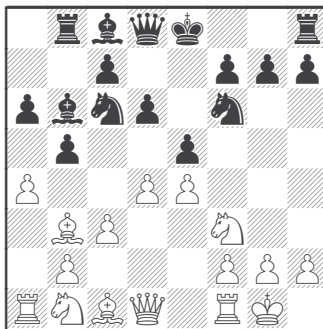
▲ Magnus Carlsen, Isle of Man 2017. Photo by Maria Emelianova

C78

Fabiano Caruana	2799
Magnus Carlsen	2827

chess.com Masters,
Isle of Man 2017

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6
4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 b5 6.♙b3 ♙c5
7.c3 d6 8.a4 ♗b8 9.d4 ♙b6



10.a5 One of White's main moves here which has also been championed by Vishy Anand. Caruana has vast experience in this line with both colors, scoring excellent results as White. Moreover, as we are about to see, he also has a novelty up his sleeve!

10...♙a7 11.h3 0-0 At the beginning of this year Caruana had an easy

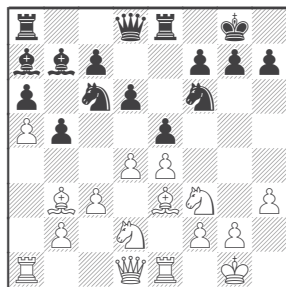


As a former top player, grandmaster **Ivan Sokolov** has won many tournaments, his most notable success on US soil being a win in the World Open in Philadelphia 2012. In Moscow 1994, he won the silver Olympiad medal as a member of the Bosnian team, while in Bled 2002 he represented his adopted country of the Netherlands for the first time. He has authored a number of best selling chess books: *Winning Chess Middlegames*, *Sacrifice & Initiative*, *Ivan's Chess Journey* and the latest one *Chess Middlegame Strategies*.

victory in Gibraltar in this line: 11...h6 12.♔e3 ♖a8 13.dxe5 ♜xe5 14.♜xe5 dxe5 15.♞xd8+ ♔xd8 16.♙xa7 ♖xa7 17.♙xf7 ♜xe4 18.♙g6 ♜d6 19.♜d2 ♔e7 20.f4 exf4 21.♙xf4 ♙b7 22.♔e1+ and the terrible position of the black king proved decisive in F.Caruaana 2827 - K.Lahno, 2530, Gibraltar 2017.

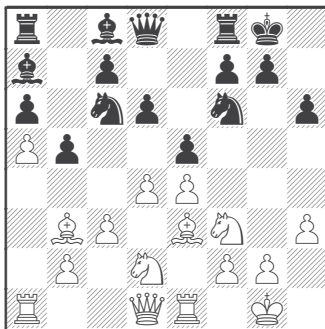
12.♔e3 ♖a8 12...♜xe4 leads to a comfortable advantage for White: 13.♙d5 exd4 14.♜xd4 ♜xd4 15.♙xe4 d5 16.♙xd4 ♙xd4 17.♙xh7+ ♔xh7 18.♞xd4± (18.cxd4± also looks better for White) as in V.Anand 2801 - A.Shirov 2739, Moscow 2007).

13.♙e1 13.♜bd2 ♙b7 14.♙e1 ♙e8



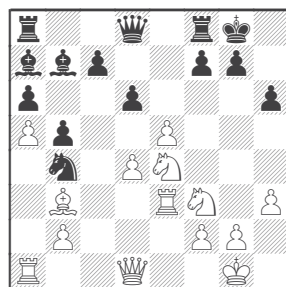
...was seen at top level some years ago, with White now deciding to close the center: 15.♜g5 ♙e7 16.d5 ♜b8 17.♙xa7 ♖xa7 18.♜f1 c6! 19.♜e3 cxd5 20.exd5 h6 21.♜f3 ♖c7. Although White was to emerge victorious, this position looks acceptable for Black, V.Anand 2790 - A.Shirov 2723, Wijk aan Zee 2010.

13...h6 14.♜bd2

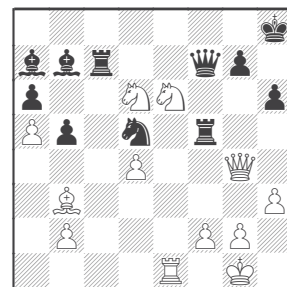


At this point Fabiano must have been rather optimistic as the previous day he scored a beautiful win in this line versus Jones and also had a novelty to unload!

14...♙e8 The above-mentioned game versus Jones went 14...exd4 15.cxd4 ♜b4. Now Caruana produced his strong novelty 16.e5! (16.d5 ♙xe3 17.♖xe3 c5 18.dxc6 ♜xc6= N.Grandelius 2644 - G.Jones 2660, Linares 2017) 16...♜fd5 17.♜e4 ♜xe3 18.♖xe3 ♙b7

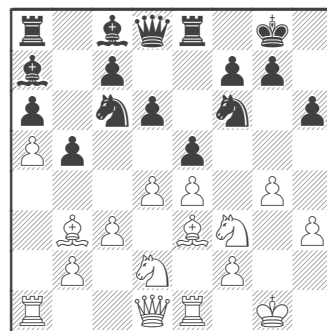


White's homework probably went right up to the decisive advantage obtained by 19.e6! ♜d5 20.exf7+ ♔h8 21.♙e1 ♖xf7 22.♖c1 ♖c8 23.♜fg5!+- ♙f5 (23...♙e7 24.♞g4 ♞e8 was arguably better, however after 25.♔h2! White removes his king from the first rank so now, after a knight jump from e4, there will never be a check on e1. Black's bishops are dead, while White has a tremendous attack and should annihilate Black on the kingside.) 24.♜e6 ♞d7 25.♞g4 ♞f7 (25...♞xe6 26.♜g3+-) 26.♖xc7 ♖xc7 27.♜xd6



27...♖xf2 28.♜xc7 ♞f6 29.♜xd5 ♞xd4 30.♞xd4 ♙xd4 31.♙e4 ♙a7 32.♜b6 1-0 F.Caruaana 2799 - G.Jones 2668, Isle of Man 2017.

15.g4!

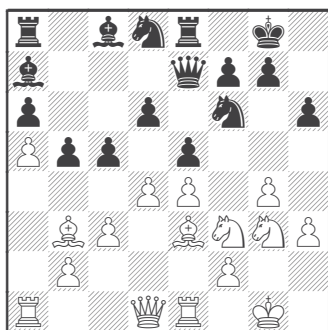


A novelty and most probably a strong one! Caruana definitely came to the Isle of Man excellently prepared for this line and produced two strong novelties in a variation in which he is an expert. It is interesting that Magnus decided to challenge Fabiano in this line! Fabiano's experiences from the black side in this position have included draws after 15.♙c2 ♙b7 V.Gashimov 2761 - F.Caruaana 2736, Wijk aan Zee 2012; and 15.♜f1 exd4 16.cxd4 ♖xe4 17.♜g3 ♙e7 S.Karjakin 2786 - F.Caruaana 2772, Russia 2013.

15...♞e7 The most straightforward idea for Black seems to be 15...exd4 16.cxd4 ♖b4, however it is easy to understand Magnus not being in the mood to test Fabiano's concrete opening preparation, such as the continuation 17.♙xf7+ ♜xf7 18.♞b3+ ♜bd5 19.g5.

16.♜f1 Black wants to push his c-pawn to c4 in order to cut off the white light squared bishop from the a2-g8 diagonal.

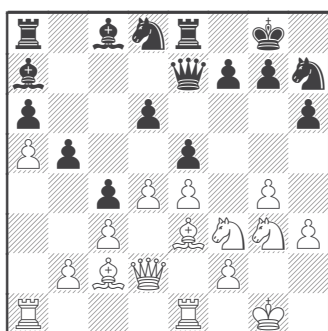
16...♜d8 17.♜g3 c5



White's position looks promising and over the next few moves he must have missed some good opportunities.

18.♞d2 18...♙d5!?; **18.♜h4!?** cxd4 19.♜hf5 ♞f8 20.cxd4.

18...c4 19.♙c2 ♜h7



20.b4! If Black does not want to be squeezed to death, then he has to reopen the a2-g8 diagonal for the white light squared bishop.

20...cxb3 21.♙xb3 ♙e6 A critical moment. White has an excellent position, but needs to 'go for it' by aggressively seizing the initiative. Strangely enough, for the next couple of moves Fabiano refrains from making

active moves and soon lands in a hopeless position. Choosing such second rate moves, instead of continuing with head on aggression, in a way resembles the plight of those playing against Fischer at his peak – they feared him so much that they travelled the path of least resistance!

22.♙c2? 22.♜f5! looks rather promising for White after 22...♞f6 (22...♙x/5 23.exf5±) 23.♙d5.

22...♞c8 23.♙d3 Now Carlsen goes to

aggressive idea is badly needed here! Strangely enough, Caruana makes the concession of losing a pawn for nothing and, by way of "compensation", going over to defense!

25.♞b2? Options were 25.♜f5 ♜xa5 26.♙xa5 ♞xa5 27.♜xd6 exd4 28.♜xd4 ♙xd4 29.♙xd4 ♜g5 30.♜g2; or 25.♙a3 ♜xa5 26.♙ca1 ♜b3 27.♙xb3 ♙xb3 28.♙xa6; or 25.♜h5.

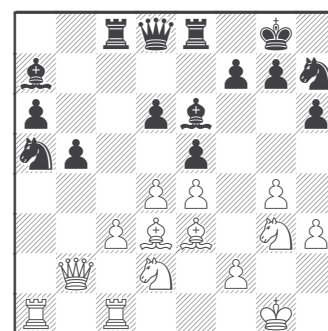
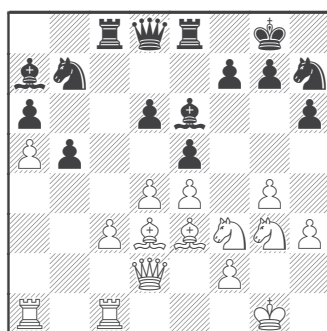
25...♜xa5 26.♜d2



collect the white pawn on a5, while also improving his ♜d8 in the process.

▲ Magnus Carlsen vs. Fabiano Caruana, Isle of Man 2017. Photo by Maria Emelianova.

23...♜b7! 24.♙ec1 ♞d8!

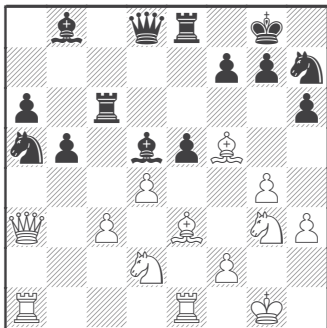


The situation is not good for White, he is about to lose his pawn on a5 and so some

26...d5! In addition to being a pawn down, White's king is now also

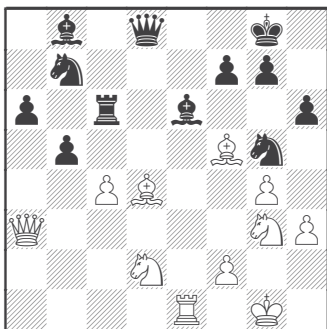
vulnerable. Black has a winning advantage and Magnus carries out the execution quickly and confidently.

27.♖e1 ♜b8! 28.exd5 ♜xd5 29.♙f5 ♜c6 30.♞a3



30...♞b7 30...♞c4 31.♞xc4 ♜xc4 also wins, as 32.♞xa6 loses to 32...exd4 33.cxd4 (33.♙xd4 ♞g5) 33...♙c6 with ...♞d5 to follow.

31.♞ad1 exd4 32.♙xd4 ♞g5 33.c4 ♜xe1+ 34.♜xe1 ♙e6



35.♞e3? A blunder in a lost position.

35...♙f4

White resigned

Some of Carlsen's games had the trademark of "simplicity", leaving the observer in awe of how such simple moves can so easily lead to victory...

C42

Magnus Carlsen 2827

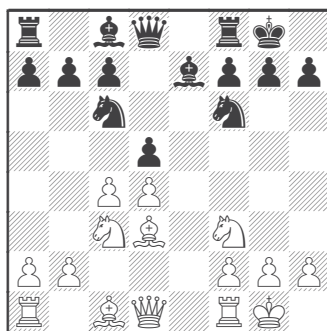
Julio Granda Zuniga 2653

chess.com Masters, Isle of Man 2017

1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.♞xe5 d6 4.♞f3 ♞xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♙d3 ♙e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.c4 ♞f6 9.♞c3 ♞c6



▲ Julio Granda Zuniga, Isle of Man 2017. Photo by Maria Emelianova.

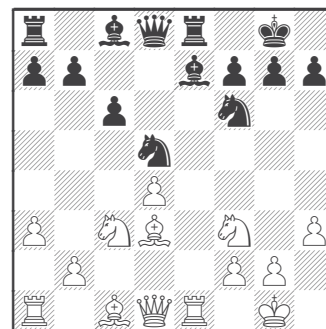


10.cxd5 10.h3 had been discussed in a world championship match from 32 years ago: 10...dxc4 11.♙xc4 ♞a5 12.♙d3 ♙e6 13.♞e1 ♞c6 G.Kasparov 2715 - A.Karpov 270, Moscow 1985.

10...♞b4 10...♞xd5 11.♙e4 ♙e6 12.♞e1 gave White some advantage in P.Leko 2722 - A.Motylev 2634, Moscow 2002.

11.♞e1 11.♙c4 ♞bxd5 12.♞e5 ♙e6 13.♞b3 ♞xc3 14.bxc3 ♙xc4 15.♞xc4 ♞d5 was fine for Black in S.Dvoirys 2590 - E.Rozentalis 2650, Beersheba 1997.

11...♞bxd5 12.h3 c6 13.a3 ♞e8



14.♞c2 As usual, Magnus is playing logical, healthy moves and in order to maintain the balance his opponent is expected to do the same for at least 40+ moves duration! I remember from some years ago the marketing pitch for Philips Electronics products – they called it "Sense & simplicity". White's play in this game might be branded something similar... "Sense & simplicity" will lead Magnus to an easy full point.

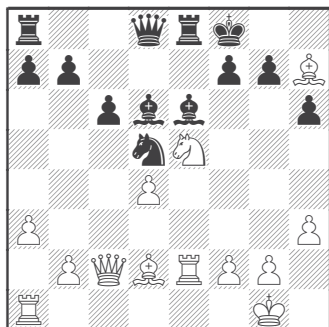
14...h6 15.♞xd5 ♞xd5 16.♞e5 ♙d6





Black has a solid position and White does not have any of the standard isolated pawn attacking themes. However Magnus finds a way to keep the tension.

17. ♖h7+ ♜f8 18. ♖d2 ♖e6 19. ♖e2

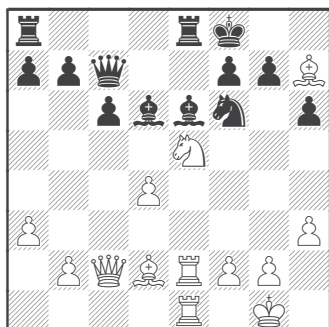


White wants to increase his e-file pressure and also capitalise on his well placed knight. The white bishop is rather unusually placed on h7, but it cannot be touched. The black king is not under any attack but it is still rather uncomfortably placed on f8. Granda underestimated the consequences of White's rooks doubling on the e-file and in a way commits the decisive mistake.

19... ♖f6? 19... ♖f6! 20. ♖ae1 (20. f4 ♖ad8 21. ♖f1 ♖c7∞) 20... ♖e7 does not allow White any e-file related tactics and the position remains balanced.

20. ♖ae1 It is not clear what Julio Granda missed, but now there is no good remedy against the threat of 21. ♖g6. Magnus wins a pawn and soon the game.

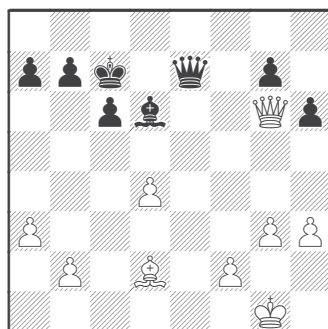
20... ♖c7



21. ♖g6+! ♜xg6 22. ♖xe6 ♖xh7 22... ♖xe6 23. ♖xe6 ♖xh7 24. ♖xd6±.

23. ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 24. ♖xe8+ ♜xe8

25. ♖xg6+ ♜d8 26. ♖xh7 ♖e7 27. g3 ♜c7 28. ♖g6



Against a mere mortal one may argue that Black resigned too early, however against Magnus Black should not lose any sleep worrying himself with such thoughts...

Black resigned

In his game versus young American grandmaster Jeffery Xiong, Magnus did something that is for him rather unusual. Having a safe option of a positional advantage, Carlsen rejected it and went for a seemingly risky attack.

D03

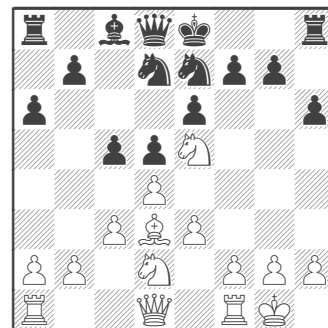
Magnus Carlsen 2827

Jeffery Xiong 2633

chess.com Masters, Isle of Man 2017

1. ♖f3 c5 2. c3 ♖f6 3. d4 Magnus is not a big fan of the Exchange Variation of the Slav and in fact in my database I found only two of his games with it – the last one in 2008. However he is ready to enter the Slav here from a rather unusual move order. Xiong opts for a different black setup.

3... e6 4. ♖g5 d5 5. e3 h6 6. ♖h4 ♖c6 7. ♖bd2 a6 8. ♖d3 ♖e7 9. 0-0 ♖d7 10. ♖xe7 ♖xe7 11. ♖e5!?



Rather a speculative decision. 11.e4 looks like a small and safe plus for White.

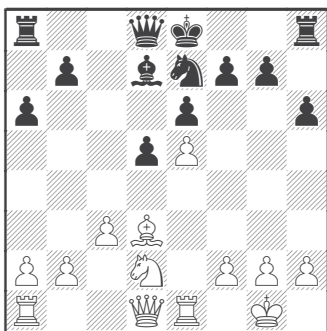
11... ♖xd4 11... ♖xe5! 12. dxe5 ♖c6 was consequent and would have tested White

▼ Magnus Carlsen vs. Jeffery Xiong, Isle of Man 2017. Photo by Maria Emelianova.



as it is arguably the most logical. Then 13.f4 is effectively a pawn sacrifice after 13...c4! 14.♖c2 ♖b6. Black now grabs a pawn, either on e3 or on b2, for which it is not easy to judge whether White has sufficient compensation.

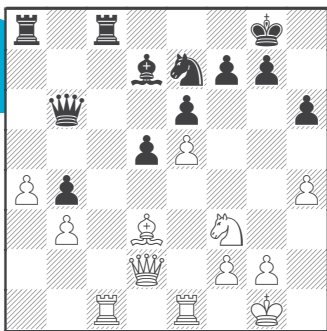
12.exd4 ♖xe5 13.dxe5 ♗d7 14.♖e1



White has now reached a pleasant kind of position he might have obtained against the French Defense.

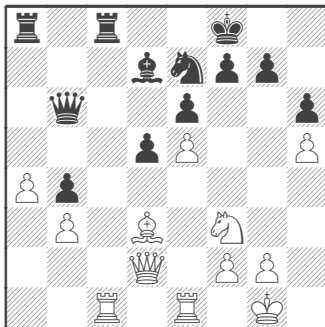
14...♖c8 15.♗f3 b5 16.h4 a5 17.a3 ♖b6 18.♖d2 Worried about the white kingside attack, Black looks for a counter on the other side of the board.

18...b4 19.cxb4 axb4 20.a4 ♖a8 21.b3 0-0 22.♖ac1 ♖fc8 Now we have an interesting situation! Magnus has the possibility of settling for a relatively safe and tactics-free advantage. However he insists on going ahead with a kingside attack, thereby making a speculative decision which entails some degree of risk.



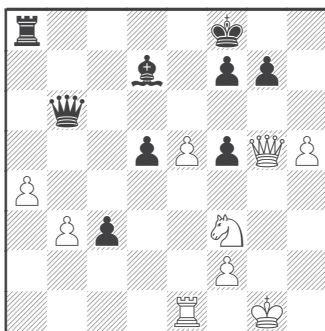
23.h5!? 23.♗d4 looks like a risk-free advantage for White. The immediate 23.♖b5 does not achieve its aim, as Black has good counterplay after 23...♖xb5 24.♖xb4 ♖ab8. We have reached a critical moment.

23...♗f8? 23...♖c3! looks okay for Black, as after 24.♖xc3 (24.g4? ♖xb3 25.g5 ♗f5+) 24...bxc3 25.♖xc3 ♖c8 Black regains his pawn and is fine.

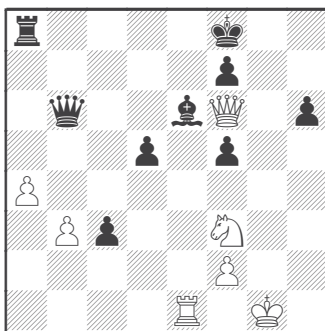


24.g4! Magnus logically continues with his attacking plan, which now works. 24.♖b5 ♖xb5 25.♖xb4 was the safe option and now leads to clear advantage for White – owing to Black's last move, 23...♗f8?, which brought the king into a pin along the a3–f8 diagonal, so if White takes on c8 (♖xc8) Black cannot now recapture with his knight.

24...♖c3 25.g5 hxg5 26.♖xc3 bxc3 27.♖xg5 ♗f5 28.♗xf5 exf5



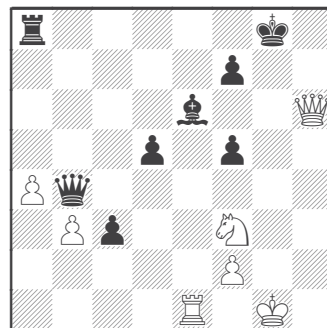
29.e6! ♗xe6 30.h6 gxh6 31.♖f6



31...♗g8? 31...♖d8! was the only way for Black to struggle on: 32.♖xc3

with the initiative (32.♖xe6? is mistake leading to a draw after 32...♖xf6 33.♖xf6 ♖c8 34.♗d4 c2 35.♗xc2 ♖xc2=).

32.♖xh6+- ♖b4



33.♗h1

Black resigned

Another American, GM Eugene Perelshteyn, was the first to really test the world champion in the Manx Masters – as early as the second round. Out for blood – or simply sending the message “I can play anything and still win!” – Carlsen indulged in some rather provocative opening choices and almost went too far.

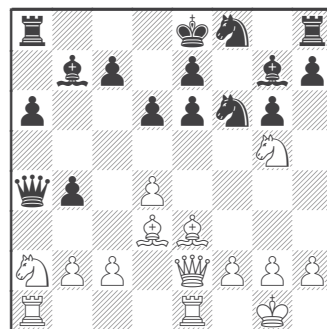
B06

Eugene Perelshteyn 2524

Magnus Carlsen 2827

chess.com Masters, Isle of Man 2017

1.d4 g6 2.e4 d6 3.♗c3 ♗g7 4.♗e3 a6 5.♗f3 b5 6.♗d3 ♗d7 7.e5 ♖b7 8.e6 fxe6 9.♗g5 ♗f8 10.0-0 ♖d7 11.♖e1 ♗f6 12.a4 b4 13.♗a2 ♖xa4 14.♖e2



Here Magnus sank into deep thought for 30 minutes or so. I was passing by his table and thought, “Well, maybe the champ has taken too much of a risk with

his choice of opening. His king is in the middle of the board...14...h6 looks like the only sensible move... but in that case all sorts of sacrifices on e6 or g6 are possible... it will be a nightmare to calculate it all!". I was very curious what Magnus was going to do, but after a while there duly came...

14...h6!



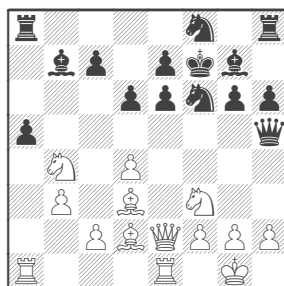
▲ Magnus Carlsen, the winner of the Isle of Man Masters 2017. Photo by Maria Emelianova.

White's almost instant reply was...

15.♖f3 The speed at which this move was played puzzled me a bit. "Was it really clever to take Magnus at his word?! What if the sacrifice works?" I was wondering... Well, computer analysis quickly confirms that the champ got it right! 15.♗xg6+? is simply bad for White after 15...♘xg6 16.♙xe6 ♔f7, while in the case of 15.♙xe6 ♙xe6 16.♗xg6+ ♔d8! White can muddy the waters, but he still will not have adequate compensation.

15...♔f7 White is temporarily two pawns down, but he will recover them by collecting Black's pawns on b4 and a6. Black will throw in the ...b4-b3 move, damaging the white pawn structure, and, after cxb3, recapture, thereby securing an excellent outpost for black knight on d5. Can White simply play 16.b3 here, keeping his pawn structure intact, chase away the black queen, then collect the black pawns on b4 and a6 with a clear advantage? Well, no, not really...

16.♗d2 16.b3 leads to an unclear game after 16...♗a5! (16...♗d7 plays into White hands: 17.♙xb4 a5 18.♙a6 ♙d5 19.♗d2 g5 20.♗xa5±) 17.♗d2 ♗h5 18.♙xb4 a5

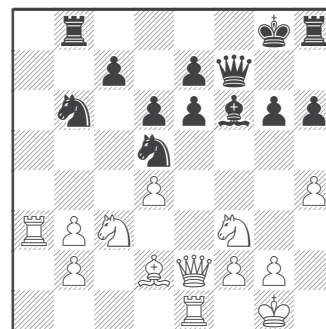


...and Black has good play. White should try to keep the balance with 19.♗c4 (19.♙a6 ♗xf3 20.♗xf3 ♗xf3 21.gxf3 ♙d5 looks fine for Black) 19...axb4 (Black can also play for a win with 19...♙e4 although after 20.♙d3 the position looks unclear) 20.♗xe6+ which leads to a forced draw: 20...♙xe6 21.♗xe6+ ♔f8 22.♗xa8+ ♗xa8 23.♗c8+ ♔f7 24.♗e6+ etc.

16...b3! Securing a central outpost on d5. 17.♙c3 17.♙b4 ♗d7 18.cxb3 a5 19.♙a6 ♙d5 20.♗xa5 is likely better for White, but beware! Regardless of the computer engine's evaluation, this position is a tricky affair for humans. Black has his trumps – especially the strong outpost on d5 – and the game is unclear.

17...♗d7 18.cxb3 ♗b8 19.♗a3 ♙d5 20.♙e4 ♔g8 21.h4 ♗e8 22.♗xa6

♗xa6 23.♗xa6 ♗f6 24.♗c4 ♙d7 25.♙c3 ♙b6 26.♗e2 ♗f7



27.♙e4 Carlsen is happy to give up the pawn on e6, trading queens in the process: 27.♗xe6 ♗xe6 28.♗xe6 ♔f7 and, with queens off the board the black king is secure, while the strong knight on d5 provides Black with good compensation.

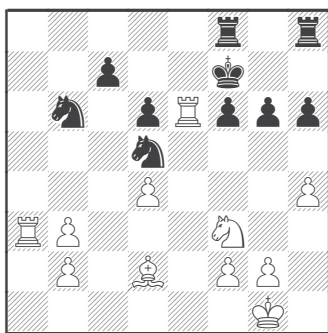
27...♗f8 With time pressure approaching White wants to clarify the position. In itself, this is understandable but the following exchanges will actually work in Black's favor!

28.♙xf6+? 28.b4±, keeping the tension, was a better move.

28...exf6 29.♗xe6 ♗xe6 30.♗xe6 ♔f7



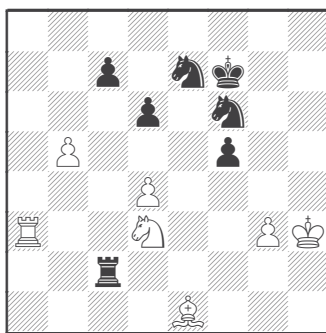
▶ Playing hall. Photo by Lennart Ootes.



Black is now better. His monster knight on d5 is superior to the white bishop and he will push his kingside pawns and launch an attack. The position is also much easier to conduct for Black. Carlsen now plays with lethal precision to the very end!

31. Rb1 Rb8 32. Rc1 Qc8 33. Qe1 Qce7 34. Qd3 g5 35. hxg5 hxg5 36. b4 Rh4 37. Qc3 Rbh8+ 38. g3 Rh1+ 39. Qg2 R8h2+ 40. Qf3 g4+ 41. Qxg4 41. Qe2? Qf5 42. Rxb1 Qxg3+ wins.

41... Rxc1 42. Qxc1 Rxf2+ 43. Qe1 f5+ 44. Qh3 Rxb2 45. Qd3 R2c2 46. b5 Qf6



47. Rb3 47. R3c3 Re2-+.

47... Re2! 47... Qg4? 48. Rb2.

48. b6? 48. Qa5 Qed5 would have prolonged the game but not changed the outcome.

48... cxb6 49. Rxb6 Qe4

White resigned

In case anyone thought Carlsen's speculative opening choice was just a one off against an opponent whose rating was comparatively low by Magnus' standard, a couple of days later he adopted another

provocative opening choice, this time against a world class opponent.

B00

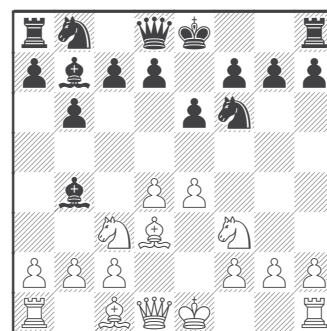
Pavel Eljanov 2734

Magnus Carlsen 2827

chess.com Masters, Isle of Man 2017

1. Qf3 b6!? This is another rather suspect opening choice. Magnus was definitely in the mood to show he could win with "anything".

2. e4 Qb7 3. Qc3 e6 4. d4 Qb4 5. Qd3 Qf6

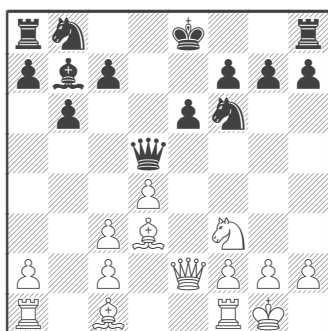




6.♖e2 It would be interesting to know what the champ was going to do upon 6.♘d2! as, after arguably the most logical 6...d5 7.e5, Black does not really have a pleasant choice: 7...♘fd7 (7...♘e4 8.♖g4 (8.♘cxe4 dxe4 9.♙b5+ c6 10.♙e2) 8...♙f8 9.♘cxe4 dxe4 10.♙c4± ♙xd2+?! 11.♙xd2 ♖xd4?? 12.0-0-0- ♖xc4 13.♙h6) 8.0-0 (8.♖g4) 8...c5 9.♖g4, was a blitz game eventually won by White in V.Kramnik 2803 - D.Andreikin 2713, Moscow 2013.

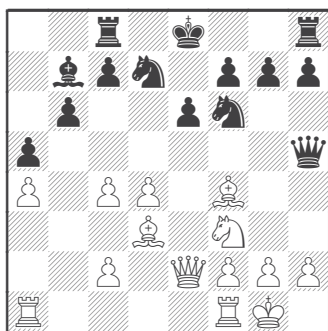
6...d5 7.exd5 7.e5 ♘e4 had already been tested at top level, with White then sacrificing a pawn by 8.0-0 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♙xc3 10.♙b1 but not getting more than mere compensation at best.

7...♖xd5 8.0-0 ♙xc3 9.bxc3



This position had in fact already been reached in two top level games. Magnus deviates from both of them.

9...♘bd7 10.c4 ♖h5 11.♙f4 ♙c8 12.a4 a5



Pavel Eljanov now comes up with an interesting plan, but it is one that will prove unfortunate.

13.♙ab1 13.♘d2 ♖xe2 14.♙xe2± was an option. Perhaps White has a small plus.

Isle of Man Masters

1.

Magnus Carlsen 7½

2-3.

Vishy Anand, Hikaru Nakamura 7

4-11.

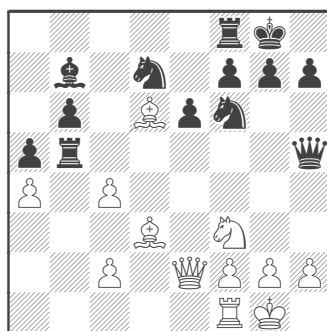
Vladimir Kramnik,
Fabiano Caruana, Michael Adams,
Pavel Eljanov,
Santosh Gujrathi Vidit,
Emil Sutovsky, Richard Rapport,
Alexey Shirov,
Sunil Dhopade Swapnil 6½,
etc.

13...0-0 White consequently continues with his plan.

14.♙b5 14.♙fe1 was the alternative.

14...c5 White must have hoped to find a way to exploit the weakness of Black's b6-pawn.

15.dxc5 ♙xc5 16.♙d6 ♙xb5



How to recapture? Eljanov logically decides to straighten out his doubled pawns

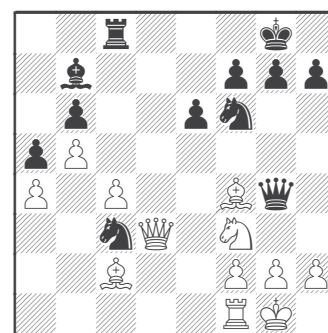
17.cxb5? In a way this is a crucial mistake. Carlsen is now able to target the weakened queenside pawns, which White will not be able to keep together. 17.axb5! was necessary, the point being that after 17...♙c8 (It is probably best for Black to settle for 17...♙xf3 18.♖xf3 ♖xf3 19.gxf3 ♙c8 with a draw as the most likely result, as the bishop pair

compensates for the weakened white pawn structure.) the white c-pawn is not hanging, so White can make a knight jump to e5 or d2.

17...♙c8 Now White cannot regroup. Black is already better and in the hands of Carlsen this is a winning advantage.

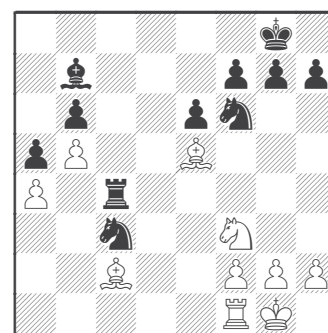
18.c4 ♘c5 19.♙c2 ♘ce4 20.♙f4 Or 20.♙e5 ♘g5 21.♘d4 ♖xe2 22.♘xe2 ♙xc4.

20...♘c3 21.♖d3 ♖g4



22.♙e5 22.♖xc3 ♘d5 (22...♖xf4± is less tactical but also leads to a clear advantage for Black) 23.♙xh7+ ♘h8 24.h3 ♘xf4 25.hxg4 ♘e2+ 26.♘h1 ♘xc3 27.♙c2 ♙xf3 28.gxf3 ♙xc4 winning.

22...♖xc4 23.♖xc4 ♙xc4



White has lost his first pawn and soon he will lose another one.

24.♙d3 ♙c8 25.♙a1 ♘fd5 26.♘d2 f6 27.♙d6 ♘b4 28.♙c4 ♙d5 29.♙f1 ♘ba2

White resigned

YOUNG CALIFORNIAN EARNS HIS FIRST GM NORM IN THE MOST DAZZLING CHESS SCENE

CALIFORNIA SUN BEATS DOWN ON A FOGGY BRITISH ISLAND

by **IM Michael Brown**

Impressed by the recent achievements of American IM Michael Brown, we were curious to discover more about his development as a chess player and also hear his personal account of how he gained his first grandmaster norm

in the Isle of Man Masters. All this was not about chess analyses but rather the real life story behind each of his nine encounters in the tournament. We hope readers will find it revealing to follow Michael's footsteps in his biggest chess quest so far.



My Isle of Man Diary

The Isle of Man Tournament was on my bucket list for quite some time, and I had spent many hours trying to piece together trips with other chess players for years. It wasn't until the 2017 Isle of Man that I was finally able to make the trip happen.

To those of you who may not have followed the event, the Isle of Man tournament is a relatively new competitive event that was sponsored by the Scheinberg family and chess.com, one of the top online chess playing communities in the world. Before booking anything, I sent an email to the organizer, Alan Ormsby, in June to see if I could join the top-tier tournament. Considering the tournament was taking place in late September, I figured I would



easily get a spot. But alas, the tournament was already full! Alan assured me that the wait list was relatively small, and I was put in the queue. A couple weeks later, another email from Alan: I was officially in! I quickly confirmed my participation, made plans to get there, and told my group of friends who were traveling with me – GM Eugene Perelshteyn, IM Keaton Kiewra, and IM Kostya Kavutskiy – that I had made the cut! I couldn't believe my luck: I was now slated to play in one of the top open tournaments of the year! Superstars like Fabiano Caruana, Hikaru Nakamura, Vladimir Kramnik, Vishy Anand, were already signed up to play and invitations were still open. In fact, just a couple weeks before the tournament started, Magnus Carlsen, the world champion, confirmed his participation in the event. The world champ at an open tournament? It was the opportunity of a lifetime! I couldn't wait to start.

After vacationing in Ireland for a couple days, it was time to get down to business. I flew in to the Isle of Man and met with the rest of my group at the Airbnb we had booked for the trip. Both Kiewra and Kavutskiy had gone to the tournament last year, and we were all itching to put in a good performance and get a shot at the top players in the world.

Round 1 For Round 1, the organizers decided to try a very unorthodox pairing system: random. And I mean, COMPLETELY random. Anybody could play anybody, meaning that everyone had the same probability of playing a top player like Carlsen in Round 1! I attended the opening ceremony where the top 10 players drew names of the opponents they were to play, and was disappointed when neither my name nor any of my roommates' names were called. We would have to hope that the Swiss pairings that would go into effect after round 1 would give us a shot at them.

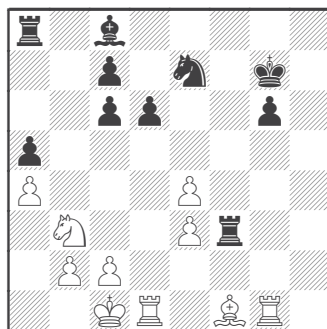
For my first round, I was paired as Black against GM Gawain Jones. Though I was in the top half of the field, with the random pairings I felt the chances of me playing up were just



▲ Gawain Jones.
Photo by Andreas Kontokanis.

as good as playing down. The game itself was very interesting: Gawain played the Scotch, and then went into an endgame line and tried to outplay me there. But as it turns out it was I who began to outplay him for a while! Eventually, I was able to push a passed pawn on the kingside, but at the critical moment miscalculated the winning line, and played another move that allowed Gawain to get a repetition.

Jones 2668 - Brown 2499



20.♖g5 ♜xe3 21.♙g2 ♜f6 22.♜xa5 ♜xa5 23.♜xa5 g5 24.b4 g4 25.♜d2 ♜a3 26.e5+ dxe5 27.♜f1+ ♙f5 28.♜xc6 ♜g6 29.♙e4 ♜f4 30.♙xf5 ♜xf5 31.♜e1 e4 32.♜d4+ ♜e5

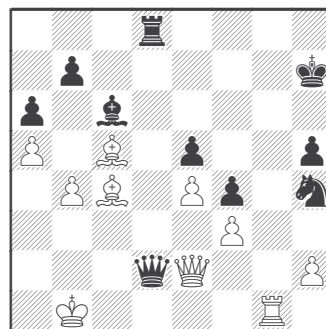
33.♜c6+ ♜f5 34.♜d4+ ♜e5 35.♜c6+ ♜f5 36.♜d4+ **Draw**

Seeing as it was the first round, I wasn't too disappointed. We had a very nice postmortem, in which Gawain explained the subtleties of the line, and it was awesome to get to talk face to face with one of the top GMs in the world. I could tell I was a little rusty missing the win in the first round, but was nonetheless excited I was able to play well enough to get chances against one of the top seeds.

Round 2 My pairing was relatively unimportant compared to the last round: I was paired down against a 2100, David Maloberti, from France. I was disappointed at not being able to play up again, but seeing as I was in the top half of the tournament to begin with, I wasn't surprised. The real gem this round was that one of my roommates, Eugene Perelshteyn, would get the chance to play Magnus Carlsen! Most of us in the room were far more excited about that than our own respective pairings.

I won my game as White in a King's Indian, though not without some difficulty. Only after my opponent missed a mating attack was I able to swiftly end the game, sacrificing a queen for a mating net.

Brown 2499 - Maloberti 2132



38.♙g8+ ♜h8 39.♙e7 **1-0**

Unfortunately, Eugene wasn't able to hold an equal endgame against Carlsen (few can!), but he played well and gave

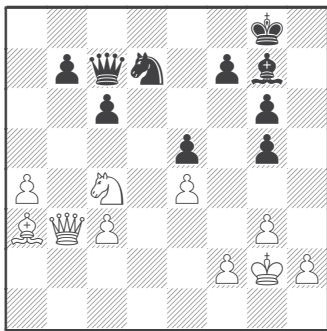
Carlsen quite the fight! [See Page 26–Ed] It was inspiring to see the game, and at the same time know that these top players aren't perfect. Perhaps we could get good results against them after all!

Round 3

This round I was paired against GM Santosh Gujrathi Vidit, the #3 Indian chess player. Vidit is only a couple of years older than me, but was also improving: he had recently crossed 2700, and was continuing to rise.

I knew it to be a tough game, but I saw that recently Vidit had started experimenting with 1.e4, so I decided to play the Steinitz against the Ruy Lopez, a passive but solid system. I played quite well for a time, but after missing a chance to force a draw, things began to get murky. I traded down into a queen and knight endgame, thinking that with the inevitable trade of queens, the knight endgame would be a draw. Alas, I realized too late that White had a tactic whereby he could win a clean pawn in the knight endgame, and I was powerless to stop it. I desperately tried to avoid this scenario, and kept the queens on the board, but with the queens on the board my position became even more precarious. Vidit eventually won a pawn, and was able to create a mating net that prompted me to resign.

Vidit 2702 - Brown 2499



31...♙f8 32.♙xf8 ♘xf8 33.a5 ♘e6 34.♙d1 f6 35.h3 ♙f7 36.♙d6 ♔g7 37.a6 bxa6 38.♙xc6 ♙e7 39.♙xa6 ♘c5 40.♙c6 ♙a7 41.♘d6 ♘d3 42.♘e8+ ♔h6 43.♙xf6 ♔h7 44.♙f8 1-0



▲ Vidit Gujrathi. Photo by David Llada.

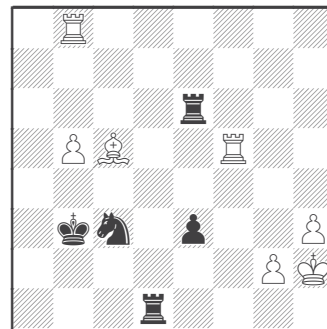
A tough game, but I was still in good spirits afterwards. The postmortem was invaluable: I got to hear Vidit's thoughts on the game, how he approached the position, and I could tell he was an extremely strong player. Though losing never feels good, I was happy to talk with him and get to play against one of the top rising chess stars in the world.

Round 4

I was paired down against IM Dietmar Kolbus from Germany. As I was White, I felt that I needed to go for a win no matter what.

I tried a sideline against the Slav, and later sacrificed a pawn for activity. I got an advantage as a result, but it was still tough to convert, but at the end of the first time control I had a very good chance to finish the game immediately. However, I missed it, and my opponent found resources even down two pawns that made the conversion difficult. I decided to sacrifice a piece for his last pawn, and then just had three pawns for the piece. But it was tough for my opponent to hold, and eventually I was able to win a queen vs rook endgame.

Brown 2499 - Kolbus 2320



51.♙xe3 ♙xe3 52.b6 ♙d7 53.♙c8 ♙b7 54.♙c6 ♔b4 55.h4 ♙e4 56.h5 ♘a4 57.h6 ♘xb6 58.♙h5 ♙e8 59.♙f6 ♘c4 60.♙f4 ♙c7 61.g4 ♔c3 62.♙h3+ ♔c2 63.♙f2+ ♘d2 64.g5 ♙c6 65.♙g2 ♙g6 66.♙a3 ♙d8 67.♙a2+ ♔d1 68.♙a1+ ♔c2 69.♙a2+ ♔d1 70.♙axd2+ ♙xd2 71.♙xd2+ ♔xd2 72.h7 ♙xg5 73.h8♙ and White won in 89 moves. 1-0

This was my longest game of the tournament up to this point, (7 hours!), but it was a good experience as well. And it was necessary to play up the next round. My roommates also did pretty well this round, and were set for some tough games the next day.

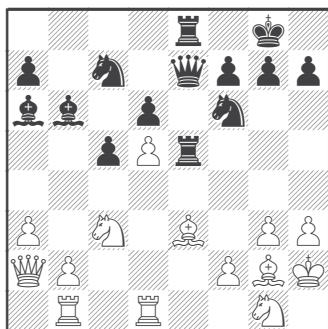
Round 5

Everyone in the room was paired up this round, so we had high expectations for the day. I was paired as White again, but this time against GM Benjamin Bok. Bok is also around my age, and was about 2620 FIDE, so I felt that this was a good pairing. The game itself was a Nimzo which I expected, but I forgot my prep on move 5 and played a move too quickly, realizing that Bok could transpose into a line which I had not prepped. I still knew the line, so I wasn't too worried, and eventually built up a huge time advantage. However, after the opening, I missed some chances in the middlegame, and Bok quickly built up an initiative. The only thing I had going for me was his lack of time, and eventually Bok missed a chance to sacrifice the exchange, only to do it a move later where it was no longer as powerful. I was able to complicate the position enough that Bok



missed his chances in time pressure, and then in an even endgame, he made some bad decisions that caused me to gain an advantage. He eventually flagged, but by that point I was already winning.

Brown 2499 - Bok 2620



22...d5 23.f3 ex3 24.fxe3 ex3
25.e1 h6 26.b3 g6 27.g4 f4
28.d2 xg2 29.xg2 b8 30.h4
d3 31.ed1 xd2+ 32.xd2 g6 33.b4
cxb4 34.axb4 e8 35.f3 e3 36.a4
d3 37.c1 e4 38.xb6 axb6

1-0

I got quite lucky that Bok didn't make the most of his chances, but I also thought that I fought well, not giving him any clear wins and finding some creative

▼ Benjamin Bok. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

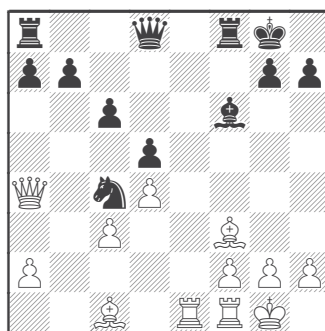


ways to pose problems for him in his time pressure.

Round 6

I was paired this round against GM Erwin L'Ami, who was actually from the same country as Bok. There were no rest days for this tournament, so I prepared for every game the morning of the game. I was Black again, and thought that playing as I was, that I should have good chances against L'Ami. He chose to play the English, a rather rare opening choice by him, but I was still prepared. I decided to sidestep one of the Aronian - Ding Liren games from the World Cup, which both Erwin and I knew, and tried to get into an original position. I was able to equalize out of the opening, but also spent quite a bit of time. Then in an equal position, I decided to try to play for a win, pushing my queenside pawns instead of getting rid of White's two bishops.

L'Ami 2611 - Brown 2499

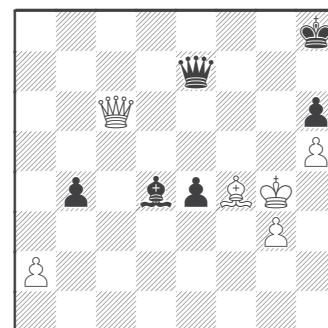


17...a5 18.e2 b5 19.c2 d7
20.d3 g6 21.g3 ae8 22.g2 xe1
23.xe1 e8 24.h1 f7 25.h4 b4
26.h5 g5 27.cxb4 axb4 28.d1 h8
29.f5 f8 30.g4 h6 31.h3 g7
32.f4 gxf4 33.xf4 e8 34.c1 e4
35.e1 xd4 36.xe4 dxe4 37.b1
e7 38.c2 e3 39.xc6 xg4
40.xg4

L'Ami was then able to get an attack with his two bishops, though I defended well and got some chances of my own. But I allowed my time to get too low, and at the critical 40th move, after we had both missed some chances, I blundered, giving White some critical tempi that cost me the game.



▲ Erwin L'Ami. Photo by David Llada.



40...g7? 40...e3! 41.xh6 xh6
42.xh6+ g8 43.g6+ h8
44.h6 d7+ 45.h4 d8+ 46.h3
d7+ 47.g4 e7 48.g7+ xg7
49.hxg7+ xg7 50.g4 1-0

A tough miss, and I pointed out the move to L'Ami in postmortem. Always tough to come back after such a loss, but I knew that I had played a good game, and L'Ami also played a very good game. I was optimistic about my play, feeling that even though I lost this game, that if I played in this manner, I would also get some better results. In the meantime, Kavutskiy was paired against Vladimir Kramnik! I was stoked for him, and though he lost after a good fight, I felt he also gave Kramnik a run for his money. This was another sign to me that these top GMs are great players, but I can play with any of them.

Q&A WITH MICHAEL BROWN

by Josip Asik

Earlier this year, in the spring edition of the American Chess Magazine, a sportsmanlike GM Alex Fishbein was very clear about your prospects by saying “I predict that Michael Brown will become a grandmaster in the not too distant future.” What was it about your performance in North Carolina (6–3), aside from beating him (!), that you think impressed such an experienced GM?

You'd have to ask him! I think perhaps one of the things why he said that is that I played every game to win. Though this cost me some tough losses, I kept this attitude throughout the event and played every game for a win. I try to always have a mindset of being a GM at the board, and then basing my decisions on what a GM would do in my position. Hopefully soon, that hypothetical will be a reality!

By looking at your games and results on a wider scale, I have gotten the impression that you are very enthusiastic when playing against “big guys” – stronger players by rating – but lacking the same energy when meeting lower rated players. Do you find the David vs Goliath story inspirational? In North Carolina, for instance,

you scored 2½ out of 3 against GMs but ultimately missed a GM norm by a half of a point. Is there any truth in all this and if so, then why is that?

That is an interesting observation! I think that these days everyone after a certain rating threshold is equally capable of playing a great game. Sometimes, when I am playing lower-rated players, I may push too hard for a win, or underestimate their chances in a dynamic position. Playing every game to win is a great mindset for playing the “big guys”, in my opinion, but sometimes against the lower-rated players who may be happy with a draw, this attitude may cause me to overpress occasionally and suffer some tough losses. I add pressure to myself sometimes when playing down that I must win, but in reality at this level anyone can play good chess, so perhaps this mentality is not as effective playing lower rated players.

Then, when you earned your GM norm at the Isle of Man Masters, in the company of Magnus, Hikaru, Wesley, Kramnik, it all seemed so obvious – this guy just needs a dazzling scene and he will shine! How did you feel being around all these big names in the chess world and even playing against them? Did it give you further motivation to take your own chess to a much higher level?

I must say, I was inspired to keep playing! I got to play some of the top stars at the event, such as Gawain Jones, Santosh Gujrathi Vidit, Zoltan Almasi, Erwin L'Ami, and even an American compatriot, Jeffery Xiong, and I felt that

I can play on par with these guys, at least to some extent. I missed forced draws against Vidit and L'Ami, but to be in a position where I am equal with these players is inspiring to me. If I'm on my form, I think I can play a great game against anybody on the other side of the table. It doesn't hurt to have top players observing my game and being

complications? In which direction do you find your style of play leaning?

I would consider myself to be more positional, but I try to act in whatever way the position needs me to act. If I need to enter tactical complications, I do so, though admittedly I try to avoid these situations if possible. I think I



Michael Brown.
Photo by Maria
Emelianova.

immersed in my position; it tells me that top players find my games interesting, which is a great sign for tournaments to come.

How would you say you balance subtle positional play and getting into immense tactical

have a good feel for positions, and so I tend to rely on my intuition in most positions. However, if you put a tactical puzzle in front of me, I'll be more than happy to enter the complications of the position to try to find the best move!

Sometimes experts say that a player's choice of openings is directly linked to their individual character traits.



As you enter your 20s, you seem like a quite serious young man. So, what are your favorite openings and could you explain why?

I've always been a fan of 1.d4, and most especially playing against the King's Indian. I also have played 1.e4 e5 for most of my life, a solid choice against any opponent. What I like about playing against the King's Indian is that I don't usually have to go after my opponent: they go after me! This kind of game is what I like, where the plans are usually obvious, and it is a question of whether my plans are executed faster than my opponent's! With 1.e4 e5, I have always liked the solidity and flexibility of e5, and continue to try new systems within e5 to see which one fits my style the best.

What's next? You can't do everything on your own. What about getting a trainer to support your further advancement? You are obviously on the track for big things, what do you need to get yourself to the top echelon?

Tough questions! I have been asking the same thing myself, to be honest! When I entered college, I decided it'd be easier just to train with a couple other players around and above my strength to keep me in chess "shape". It seems to have worked well, since I jumped from 2360 to 2500 FIDE! In college it's tough to work consistently with another player though, but perhaps I may spend a semester or a year where I focus on chess and just try to get as far as I can. It'll be easier to find a trainer and

other ways to improve my chess once my sole focus is chess.

What are your long-term goals and/or ambitions in chess?

Currently, I just want to earn the Grandmaster title, but like Mr. Fishbein said above, hopefully that's a short-term goal! In the long term, I want to cross 2600 FIDE, and perhaps even join the top 100 club if I focus enough on the game. But to get there I'll need to improve my game, and that's always tough especially at such a high level. But as long as I continue to enjoy playing chess, I see no reason for quitting.

The Internet is always a good choice for training. Do you practice your play on Internet? Maybe test new ideas privately? How do you view Internet play as an important resource for keeping in form?

The Internet is honestly such an awesome tool! It's how I usually train with people in college. BYU doesn't have a very strong chess population, so I work with people all over the US and sometimes outside of the country to train. I can practice new openings, discuss ideas in positions, and solve puzzles with some of my training

partners online. I will admit that I play a lot of Internet blitz as well, and though it is a lot of fun, I can't say that it's improving my game.

Back to home life in sunny California. How and when did you learn chess in the first place? Who taught you? Are you finding enough sparring partners in the greater area

of Los Angeles? How would you describe your path to success in chess and how important is support from friends and family when you are far away competing in chess tournaments?

I was in first grade when I joined the Academic Chess club at my elementary school. Combined with playing with my dad, that's where I learned to play. After a couple years, I began to

play in USCF tournaments in third grade, and got my first coach, FM Takashi Iwamoto, around the same time. The chess community around LA was always improving, and so I was lucky to be a part of that as a young chess player. I was able to attend camps and continue to play in tournaments where I had a group of friends around my age that always pushed me to keep playing and improving. My parents were always so supportive, driving me to tournaments and giving me

advice on competition in general. And the friendships I made with chess still are important to me even now; many of those young players are now working at different companies, attending college, and it's awesome to have connections through simply sharing a common hobby.

Now you are a student at Brigham Young University in Utah. What are your interests outside of chess, both from an academic and extra-curricular point of view. Are you passionate about any other sports?

Right now I am double majoring in Economics and Mathematics. I am also minoring in Computer Science, and hope to pursue graduate school later in my career. I'm an avid fan of both pool and ping pong, and can enjoy these sports pretty much wherever I am. But chess has always been my #1 hobby, and in my spare time that'll usually be the first activity I do.

What is chess for you? What joy do you find in this game? How likely is it that you will recommend it to kids?

Chess is just creativity at its best. I am always looking to learn new ideas, and create new masterpieces at the board. The ups and downs are just part of the ride, and I find joy in both learning from my mistakes and then using that knowledge to do better the next time. I think chess is an awesome game to learn perseverance, creativity, and all-around mental toughness, and I would highly recommend it to any kids who are willing to study and take it seriously.

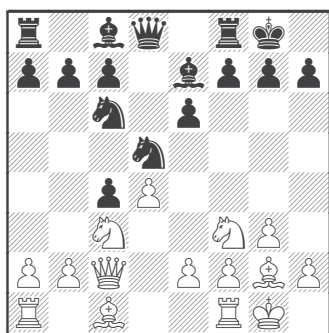
THE CHESS
COMMUNITY
AROUND L.A.
WAS ALWAYS
IMPROVING,
AND SO I WAS
LUCKY TO BE A
PART OF THAT
AS A YOUNG
CHESS PLAYER

Round 7

This game would be my worst of the tournament. I was paired with GM Jeffery Xiong from the US. We had played three times before, with each game being close, but Xiong was up 2 games. I pushed on that, playing natural moves relatively quickly and slowly improving my position. Eventually my opponent allowed me to combine both queenside and kingside play to win a pawn, and after he took a “poisoned” pawn, I swiftly punished him, winning two pawns and transitioning into a won endgame.

I was expecting Xiong to try the Gruenfeld or perhaps even some Queen’s Gambit Accepted this time, but instead he repeated the Nimzo, which he had played against me the last time we played. I decided to play the rare 4.g3, which has been seen at the top levels but very sparsely compared to the main lines, like the Rubinstein or the Classical variations. Unfortunately, I didn’t know too much about the line, but neither did Jeffery. We both spent a lot of time in the opening, but I missed a critical line at a crucial juncture that gave Xiong a free initiative. I was on the defense after that: he had a rook and two pawns for two minor pieces, but he had the two bishops, which were cutting off my king in the center effectively.

Brown 2499 - Xiong 2633



10.♖d1 ♘cb4 11.♞d2 c5 12.dxc5 ♙xc5 13.e4 ♘d3 14.exd5 ♘xf2 15.♙f1 ♘xd1 16.♞xd1 exd5 17.♞xd5 ♞xd5 18.♙xd5 ♖d8 19.♙e1 ♙g4 20.♙f4 ♖e8 21.♘c3 ♖ad8 22.h3 ♙f5 23.♙c1 h5 24.h4 ♖d7 25.♙f3 ♖de7 26.♘c2 b5 27.♙g2 ♙g4 28.♙xg4 hxg4 29.a3 a5 30.♙f1 b4 31.axb4 axb4 32.♙a4 ♙a7 33.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 34.♙xe1 ♖e6 35.b3 cxb3 36.♙d3 ♙d4 37.♙c1 ♖c6 38.♙b2 ♙a7 39.♙e2 f6 40.♙d1 ♙b8 41.♙ac5 ♙xg3 42.♙xb3 ♙xh4 43.♙d4 ♖c4 44.♙e2 g6 45.♙f4 ♙f7



▲ Jeffery Xiong. Photo by Maria Emelianova.

46.♙d3 ♖c5 47.♙c2 ♙g5 48.♙e2 ♖d5+ 49.♙d4 b3 50.♙b4 b2 51.♙c2 ♖b5 52.♙c3 f5 0-1

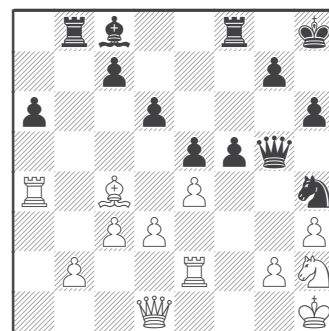
In this game I could tell I was not at my best: I spent a lot of time on every move, made bad decisions that I felt I wouldn’t in most games, and eventually Jeffery got the best of me. He played a great game, and credit to him for playing well; still, I was disappointed with my play, and knew I would have to change something for the last few rounds of the tournament. But with 3½/7, I still felt happy with my performance; the latest losses had dipped my performance rating far below the GM norm requirement, but I was more interested in the quality of my play. I wanted to make sure that I played the last two games to the best of my ability, and let the cards fall where they may.

Round 8

This would be my first time being paired down as Black. I was facing IM Peter Roberson from England, and decided to prep the Archangel in the Ruy Lopez against him. I could tell from the onset of the game that he was uncomfortable with the variation, and had a time disadvantage

early on. I pushed on that, playing natural moves relatively quickly and slowly improving my position. Eventually my opponent allowed me to combine both queenside and kingside play to win a pawn, and after he took a “poisoned” pawn, I swiftly punished him, winning two pawns and transitioning into a won endgame.

Roberson 2403 - Brown 2499



23.♙xa6 ♖a8 24.♙b5 ♖xa4 25.♙xa4 fxe4 26.dxe4 ♙a6 27.♖c2 ♞g3 28.♙c6 ♙d3 29.♖d2 ♖f2 30.♖xf2 ♞xf2 31.♞g1 ♞xb2 32.♙g4 ♞xc3 33.♙d5 ♞c2 34.♙e3 ♞b1 35.♞xb1 ♙xb1+ 0-1

I was very happy with my play here; I played fast and good moves, and put my opponent under pressure early on. I could tell that my mindset had changed from the beginning of the game: the pressure of getting the GM norm was pretty much off, and I had only one goal now: play my game, no matter what. I feel that for me, this attitude is how I best play. I failed to do this at critical moments in some of my other games, so I made a commitment to myself that the last two rounds I would achieve this one goal. Nothing else mattered.

Round 9

Then I got my pairing for the final round. Some of my teammates had done some calculations, and realized that if I won my last round against a 2530 or above, that I would get a GM norm! So as luck would have it, I was paired against the highest player in my score group, GM Zoltan Almasi, one of the top Hungarian



chess players. I was intimidated, to be sure, but just made a goal of playing my game no matter what. I also figured that Almasi, who had had a couple of lousy results in the tournament, would want to finish strong with a win, and could use this to my advantage, especially with me having White. He surprised me early on, playing a hybrid of the Queen's Indian and Nimzo Indian defenses.

A50

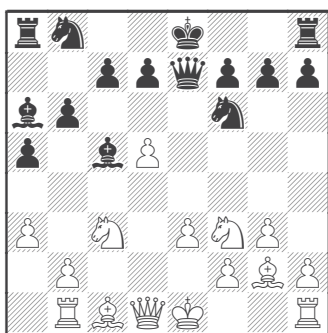
Michael Brown 2499 - Zoltan Almasi 2707
chess.com Masters, Isle of Man 2017

1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6 Already a surprise for me. I was expecting a Nimzo from Almasi.

3.♖c3 ♗b7 4.a3 ♖f6 5.d5 This is a pretty rare sideline, but I have had some good results with it, so I decided to stick with it this game.

5...♗c5 6.♖f3 a5 7.g3 exd5 8.cxd5 ♖g4 9.e3 ♖f6 I knew that Black's point must be that if I ever fianchetto my light-squared bishop, that he would play ...♗a6 and block me from castling. Still, I was pretty sure that strategy cost Black quite a bit of tempi, so I was comfortable with my position.

10.♗g2 ♗a6 11.♖b1 ♖e7?

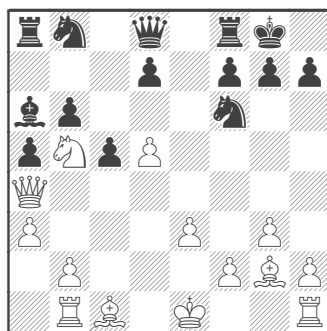


Already this is an error! Almasi is playing very provocatively here, and now I made my first mistake, not fully taking advantage of his precarious situation.

12.♖d4 12.♖h4! was correct. I saw this but figured that Black may just ignore it with **12...g6 13.d6 ♗xd6 14.♗xa8 c6** when I wasn't totally sure how to extract my bishop, though at the same time it's also not clear how Black wins it rightaway. But at the same time, it is

difficult for me to castle, so I opted out of this variation. **15.♖f3 0-0 16.♗d4 ♗e8 17.♗d2 ♗c5 18.♖h4 ♗d3 19.♗d1 ♖a6 20.♗b7 ♖c7** seems quite scary since my extra rook is doing me no good, though it is still good to have in reserve.

12...♗xd4 13.♖xd4 c5 14.♖a4 ♗d8 15.♖b5 0-0



16.0-0 16.d6 ♖c6 17.♗d2 was my last chance to get an advantage. (17.♖c7?! is what I considered, and after **17...♗d3** I feel White has overextended, though it isn't anything terrible yet.)

16...d6 17.♗d1 ♖d7 18.♗f1 ♖e8 19.♖c4 I missed that the move order **19.b3** is far stronger than that which I played in the game.

19...a4 20.b3 axb3 21.♖xb3 ♖e7 22.♗b2 22.e4! was more precise, and

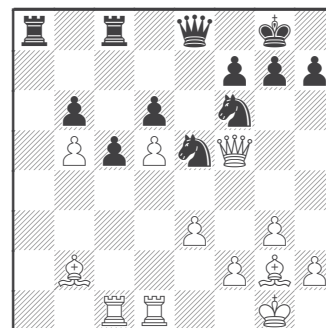
Zoltan Almasi. Photo by Andreas Kontokanis.



here I enjoy a nice space advantage and the two bishops.

22...♖d7 23.a4 ♖ef6 24.♗g2 24.f3! I simply underestimated the strength of having the f3-e4-d5 chain. It just solidifies my entire position, and Black will be hard-pressed to find a way into my position.

24...♗fc8 25.♗bc1 ♖e5 26.♖c2 ♗xb5 27.axb5 ♖e8 28.♖f5



Around here I thought that my advantage had gone. But I still had the two bishops, and figured that at the very least I was still far away from losing. Unfortunately, Black is simply so solid that there really is no way into his territory.

28...♗d8 29.♖b1 ♗a2 30.h3 h6 31.g4 ♖e7 32.♗c3 ♗a3 33.♗b2 ♖b3 34.♗a1 ♖xb1 35.♖xb1 ♗a8 36.♗c3 g6 37.♖c2 h5 38.g5 ♖fd7 39.h4 39.♗b2 was a very inhuman move, but here it is best; I am preparing to double on the diagonal, and the g5-pawn is taboo for now. **39...♖xg5 40.f4 ♖g3 41.fxe5 ♖xe5 42.♖e4±**

39...♖h7 40.♗a1 ♖xa1+ 41.♗xa1 We have reached the first time control. I figured that my two bishops were quite strong in this position, but it isn't easy to break through. Still, Almasi was sensing the danger as well, but he found a nice way to counter my dominance on the diagonal.

41...f6 42.f4 ♖g4 43.e4 ♖f8 44.gxf6 ♖a8 45.♗c3 45.♖b2 ♖dxf6 46.e5; 45.♖c3 ♖dxf6 46.e5 dxe5 47.fxe5 ♖a2 48.exf6 ♖f2+; 45.♗b2! is the best move here. I didn't realize the subtle difference between this move and ♗c3, since I didn't want to allow his queen to a5. **45...♖dxf6 (45...♖a5? 46.♗c3! Now this is far more timely. 46...♖xb5 47.f7±) 46.e5 dxe5 (46...♖e3 47.♖c3) 47.fxe5 ♖e3 48.d6+.**

45...♖dxf6 46.♖b2?! Imprecise.



The Americans on the Isle of Man: Anna Zatonskih, Keaton Kiewra, Alex Lenderman, Marc Esserman, Eugene Perelshteyn, Michael Brown, James Tarjan, Jeffery Xiong, and Kostya Kavutskiy. Photo by Maria Emelianova.

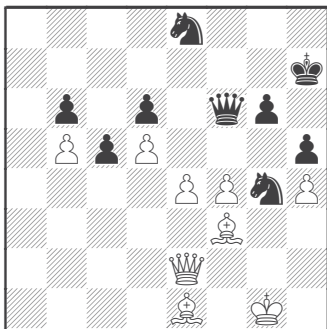
46.e5?! ♖e3 and Black gets in with both of his knights.

Moving the bishop to f3 first was the better option. 46.♗f3 and now if Black plays like he did in the game with 46...♞d8 (46...♞a3 47.♞b2 ♞xb2 48.♗xb2 ♖g8 is perhaps Black's best chance, but White is always pushing here.) 47.♞e2 and I am up a tempo compared to the game.

46...♞d8! Almasi is alert. Now the game is just equal since I can't create any real threats against his king.

47.♗f3 47.e5 dxe5 48.fxe5 ♖xd5 is no longer dangerous for Black; my battery doesn't do anything anymore.

47...♖e8 48.♗e1 ♞e7 49.♞e2 ♞f6

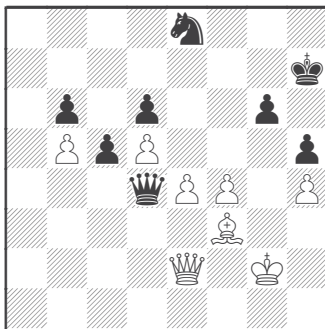


50.♗g2 I was very happy to find this move. Otherwise, my position may even be worse: 50.♗g3 ♞d4+ 51.♗g2 ♖f6

and I am just paralyzed.

50...♞d4 By this point, Almasi's pieces have become quite active and it's now more double-edged. I decided my best chance was to try to get rid of one of his active pieces here with...

51.♗f2 ♖xf2 52.♞xf2 ♞c3 53.♞e2 Threatening to take on h5. But here Almasi played the very double-edged... 53...♞d4!?



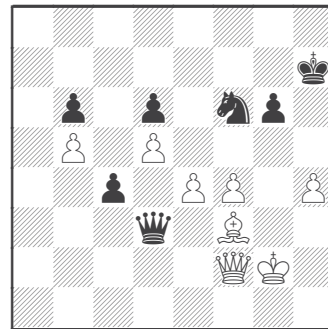
Goaded me to take the pawn! However, he has a lot of counterplay with his c-pawn.

54.♗xh5 ♖f6 54...c4 was perhaps the more principled way to go. Then I have to go for counterplay on the kingside. 55.♗f3 (55.f5 ♖f6 56.♗xg6+ ♖h8 but despite my two pawn lead, I still am unable to create threats against the king.)

55...c3 56.h5 gxh5 57.♗xh5 ♖f6 58.♗f3∞ Though the passed c-pawn is dangerous, Black's king has no cover; as long as White can create counterplay, he should be able to draw.

55.♗f3 c4 56.♞f2 Offering a trade of queens which Almasi must refuse, since the ensuing minor piece endgame will be lost. But now my queen invades.

56...♞d3 56...♞xf2+ 57.♗xf2+- is completely losing for Black.



57.♞xb6! My best chance. I start to take everything in Black's camp.

57...c3 58.♞c7+ ♖h6 59.♞xd6 c2? The ultimate mistake. It was the end of the second time control, and thus we were getting low on time again. But here Black has to cut his losses and force a perpetual. This move asks for too much from the position, and I punish Black duly. 59...♞d2+ 60.♗h3 ♞f2 was absolutely necessary; I have nothing better than to give a perpetual.

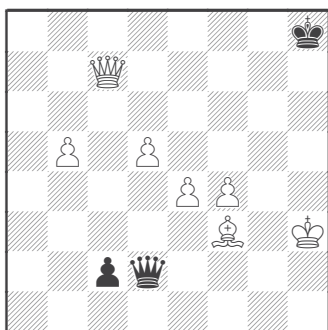
60.♞xf6! The mate threat on h8 stops Black from queening.

60...♞d2+ 61.♗h3 ♖h7 62.h5! Tearing open Black's king. The combined threats on his king and my extra piece keep Black from being able to promote.

62...gxh5 62...c1♞ loses to a nice mate: 63.hxg6+ ♖h6 64.♞h8+ ♖xg6 65.♗h5# A picturesque finish; Black is completely helpless to stop mate despite his two queens.



63. ♖f7+ ♜h8 64. ♖f8+ ♜h7 65. ♖f7+ ♜h8 66. ♖xh5+ ♜g7 67. ♖e5+ ♜h7 68. ♖e7+ There are many ways to win the position, but I decide to put my queen behind his pawn to make sure there aren't any nasty surprises with the second queen. 68. ♙g4 ♖e3+ 69. ♜h4 ♖a7 70. ♙f5+ ♜g8 71. ♙e6+ ♜h7 72. ♖f5+ ♜h6 73. ♖g5+ ♜h7 74. ♙f5+ ♜h8 75. ♖h6+ ♜g8 76. ♙e6+ is perhaps more precise, but with limited time, I figured the queen behind the pawn would make sure there's no surprises. 68... ♜g8 69. ♖d8+ ♜g7 70. ♖c7+ ♜h8



71. ♙h5 My bishop joins the attack. Black still can't queen, and in order to stop mate, he has to give up the potential of queening his pawn.

71... ♖e3+ 71... c1 ♖ 72. ♖d8+ ♜g7 73. ♖e7+ ♜g8 74. ♙f7+ ♜g7 75. ♙e6+ ♜h6 76. ♖f8+ ♜g6 77. ♙f5+ ♜h5 78. ♖h8 mate was what I calculated in case he tries to queen again.

72. ♜h4 ♖xe4 Black wins a couple of my pawns, but now my king can march in, and Black is helpless to stop it.

73. ♜g5 ♖xd5+ 74. ♜h6 and here Black resigned, due to the following variation:

74. ♜h6 ♖e6+ 75. ♙g6 ♖h3+ 76. ♜g5 ♖g3+ 77. ♜f6 ♖h4+ 78. ♜f7 and fresh out of checks, Black will be mated shortly.

0-1

I could hardly believe I had won! I confirmed with the tournament director that I also secured my GM norm as well, and could breathe a sigh of relief.

Aftermath

It was a long and difficult tournament, but that was what I signed up for. I wanted to get the chance to play some of the top players in the world, and I did! Playing alongside the world's best was an amazing experience, and I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to play in such a prestigious event. It's not every day you are in a room with three world champions (former and current), and I got to experience that every round! I'd like to thank Alan Ormsby, the sponsors of the event, and all the arbiters who made sure this tournament ran smoothly from start to finish. It was one of the best tournaments I have ever played in. And also thanks to the top players who came to the event. It was truly an honor to meet some of them and to learn from the best. Until next year!

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Do Chess Columnists Play Chess?

by **GM Ivan Sokolov**

FIRST, A VERY
TYPICAL EXCUSE
— FOR THE PAST
COUPLE OF YEARS
I HAVE BEEN
MORE FOCUSED
ON COACHING
AND WRITING
BOOKS AND
UNFORTUNATELY
THAT HAS
IMPACTED ON THE
STANDARD OF MY
COMPETITIVE PLAY...

N

evertheless, I have two interesting games to show. A win against one of the best Israeli players, Maxim Rodshtein, and a loss against the young Hungarian, Richard Rapport.

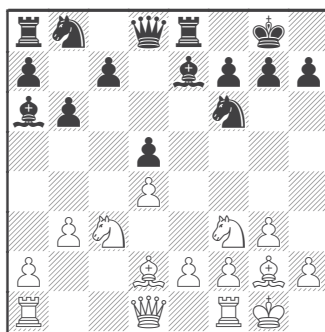
E15

Ivan Sokolov	2603
Maxim Rodshtein	2695

chess.com Isle of Man Masters 2017

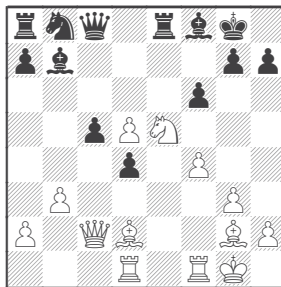
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♙a6
5.b3 ♙b4+ 6.♙d2 ♙e7 7.♙g2 0-0

8.0-0 d5 9.cxd5 exd5 10.♘c3 ♙e8



This particular position was seen a lot at the latest Candidates and Karjakin's fine preparation and good understanding of how to handle it played an important role in his tournament win.

11.♙c1 While working on this article, I checked the database and came across a brilliant game that Aronian played recently at a St. Louis event. Though it was conducted at a rapid time limit, White's play was inspired, original and quite simply brilliant, so I would like to share this game with you here: 11.♘e5 ♙b7 12.♙c2 c5 13.dxc5! bxc5 14.♙ad1 ♙c8 Now White plays it spectacularly! 15.e4! ♙f8 16.f4 d4 17.♘d5 ♘xd5 18.exd5 f6



19.♙de1! fxe5 20.fxe5 ♘d7 21.e6 ♘f6 22.♙xf6! gxf6 23.♙f5 ♙d8?

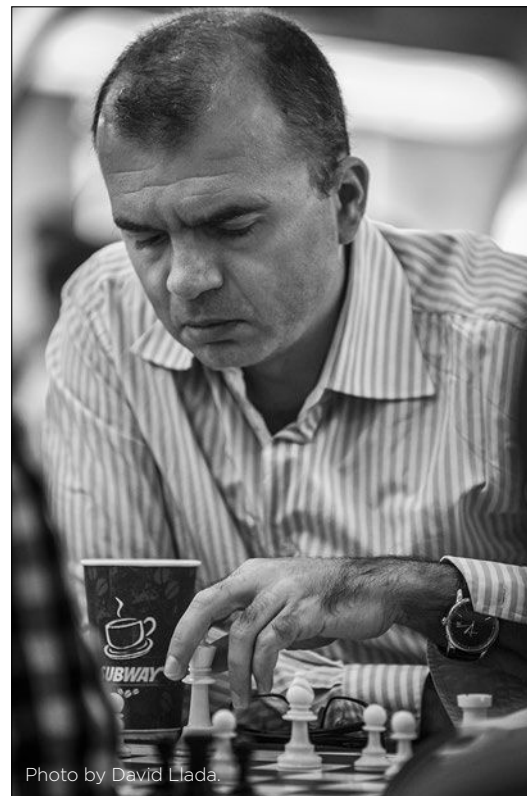
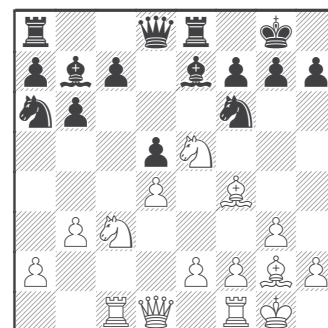


Photo by David Liada.

(23...♙c7 was a better defense for Black, however after 24.♙e4 White's attack should prove decisive.) 24.♙e4 ♙e7 25.♙g4+ ♘h8 26.♙e4 ♙c8 27.♙h4 ♘g8 28.♙xh7 ♙xd5 29.♙g6+ ♙g7 30.♙h5 ♙xe4 31.♙h8 1-0 L.Aronian 2799 - D.Navara 2737, St.Louis 2017.

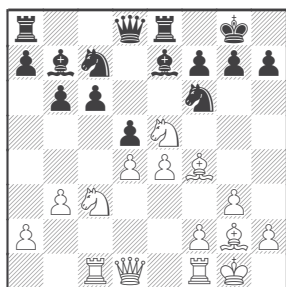
11...♙b7 12.♙f4 ♘a6 13.♘e5 The Israeli grandmaster decides not to hurry with the ...c7-c5 pawn push.





13...c6 Here I came up with the idea of pushing the g- and h-pawns on the kingside judging it to be dangerous for Black, provided that my pawns did indeed get rolling.

Alternatives for Black were: 13...c5 14.♖b5 ♖e4 15.dxc5 ♙xc5 16.♗d3 ♗d7 17.a4 ♙e7 which was somewhat better for White in V.Laznicka 2681 - K.Sasikiran 2676, New Delhi 2011; and 13...h6 14.♗b5 ♙f8 15.♙h3 c5 16.a3 ♖e4 17.♙c2 as played in G.Meier 2656 - V.Kramnik 2781, Dortmund 2011, when White had some advantage, although Kramnik eventually emerged victorious. **14.h4** 14.e4 would have led to an advantage for White after 14...♗c7

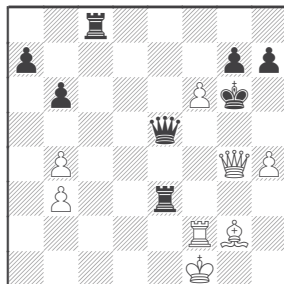


15.♗xd5! A move quickly indicated by the computer, but missed during the game by me and perhaps Maxim too. Now White is better: 15...♗cxd5 (15...cxd5 16.♗xf7! ♗xf7 17.♙xc7 ♙b8 18.e5+-) 16.exd5 ♗xd5 (16...cxd5 17.♙h3) 17.♙h5 ♙f8 (17...g6 18.♙f3) 18.♗d2 ♙c8 19.♙fe1 and White has the initiative. **14...♙a3** 14...♗c7? would be a blunder due to 15.♗xc6 ♙xc6 16.♙xc7 ♗xc7 17.♗xd5 ♗xd5 18.♙xd5+-; while 14...♗h5 15.♗d2 ♗f6 16.e4 I judged to be better for White.

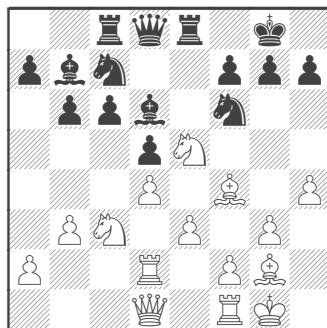
15.♙c2 ♙d6 16.e3 Preparing to push the g-pawn. 16.e4 would again lead to some advantage for White. 16...♗b4 17.♙d2 ♗xe4 18.♗xe4 dxe4 19.♙xe4 Threatening ♙xh7. 19...♗c7 20.♙b1 g6 21.♙e1 White seems to have pressure. 21...♙e6 22.a3 ♗d5 23.♙xd5 cxd5 24.♙c2 ♗d8 25.h5 g5 26.♙ce2! ♙xe5 (26...gxf4? 27.♗xf7+-) 27.♙xe5.

16...♙c8 17.♙d2 I rejected an immediate 17.g4 due to 17...♗b4 18.♙d2 ♙a6! (18...♗e4 19.♗xe4 dxe4 20.g5 looks promising for White.) when I could not figure out what was going on and so decided to postpone the g4-pawn push. The silicon brain gives an interesting tactical line ending in a draw by

perpetual check: 19.a3 (19.♙e1 c5) 19...c5 (19...♙xf1 20.♙xf1) 20.axb4 ♙xf1 21.♗xf1 cxd4 22.♗xf7 ♗xf7 23.♗xd5 ♙xf4 24.♗xf4 ♗c7 25.g5 (25.♙xd4 ♙ed8 26.♙f3 ♙xd4 27.♙xd4 ♗d7=) 25...dxe3 26.fxe3 ♙xe3 27.gxf6 ♙xf4+ 28.♙f2 ♙e5 29.♙d7+ ♗g6 30.♙g4+



30...♗h6 31.♙xg7+ ♗h5 32.♙xh7+ ♗g4 33.♙g6+ ♗xh4 34.♙h6+ ♗g4=. **17...♗c7**



Now I felt the time was right to push my g-pawn.

18.g4 An old rule says 'an attack on the flank should be countered by a reaction in the center'! But Maxim was hesitant about making the essential advance ...c5, countering my flank attack, and this indecisiveness was to cause his downfall in this game. An alternative was 18.♗d3 ♙f8= rather than 18...♙xf4 19.♗xf4 ♗d6 20.♗h5±.

18...♙b4 18...c5! would have called into question the timing of my g4-pawn push. **19.♙c2 ♗e6** 19...♙xc3 20.♙xc3 ♗e4 would probably lead to approximate equality: 21.♙c2 (21.♙xe4 dxe4 22.♙g3 ♗d5 23.♙c1 ♙a6) 21...♗e6 22.♙xe4 dxe4 23.♙g3 c5 24.dxc5 ♗xc5 25.♗c4 ♙a6 26.♗d6 ♙xf1 27.♙xf1 ♗d7=. **20.♙g3** 20.g5 ♗xf4 21.exf4 ♗d7 22.♙g4 was an alternative.

20...♗d7 20...c5 would again have led to an unclear game: 21.dxc5 (21.g5

cxd4 22.♗b5 ♗e4) 21...♙xc3 22.♙xc3 ♗xc5∞.

21.♗d3 ♙f8 22.f4 ♙a6 It was high time for Black to go for 22...c5!∞, e.g. 23.f5 ♗c7 24.♗e5 cxd4 25.exd4 ♗xe5 26.dxe5 ♙a6 27.♙e1 d4 28.♗e4 d3.

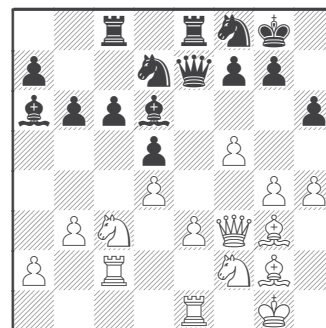
23.♙e1 23.f5! ♗ec5 24.dxc5 ♙xe3 was difficult for me to evaluate, however after 25.♙f3 ♙xd3 26.♙xe3 ♙xc2 27.♙xc2 ♙xc5 28.♗d1 White should have the advantage.

23...♙d6 24.♗f2 ♙e7 25.♙c1 ♙a3? 25...g6!, halting the avalanche of the white pawns, was a must for Black.

26.f5! Now Black is in bad shape.

26...♗ef8 If 26...♙xc1 27.fxe6±.

27.♙c2 ♙d6 28.♙f3 h6



29.e4! The position opens up, after

Maxim Rodshtein. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

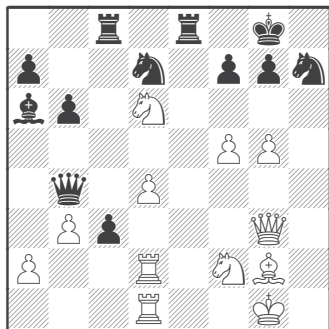


which the tactics clearly work for White, who now has a decisive advantage.

29...♙xg3 30.♖xg3 ♜b4 31.♞d1 dxe4 32.♜cxe4 c5 Black is simply too late with his counterplay and White has various ways to win.

33.♞cd2 Also **33.♜d6 ♞e1+ 34.♞xe1 ♜xe1+ 35.♜h2 ♞d8 36.♞d5** is decisive.

33...c4 34.g5 hxg5 35.hxg5 ♜h7 36.♜d6 c3

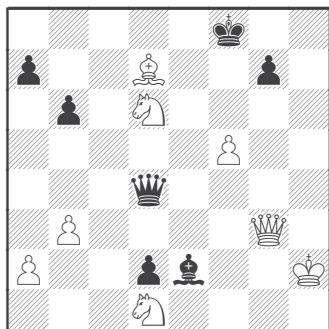


37.g6! ♜g5 37...fxg6 loses to **38.♞d5+ ♜f8 39.♖xg6 ♜g5 40.♞c2 ♜f6 41.♜xe8 ♞xe8 42.♖xg5 ♜xd5 43.♜g4.**

38.gxf7+ 38.♞c2, maintaining all the threats, also wins: **38...♞e2 39.♜xc8 ♞xc2 40.♖xg5** winning.

38...♜xf7 39.♞d5 cxd2 40.♞xf7+ ♜f8 41.♞xe8 ♞c1 White has a massive material advantage and needs only to take care that he does not succumb to some trick. Fortunately for me the time control had now been reached and, having extra time for thought, I had an easy win.

42.♞xd7 ♜xd4 43.♜h2 ♞xd1 44.♜xd1 ♞e2



White is momentarily two pieces up and has a straightforward winning plan. The knight on d1 will be given up for the advanced black d2-pawn and White will still be a full piece up.

45.♜e3 The computer solution is the

nice **45.♞e6! ♞xd1 46.♜b5! ♜d8 47.f6** and White mates. But humans are more likely to be happy to be simply a piece up and with no need to calculate anything...

45...d1 ♜ 46.♜xd1 ♞xd1 47.♞c6 ♞c2 48.♞g2 a6 49.♜e4 ♞xe4 50.♖b8+ ♜f7 51.♖f4 ♜b2 52.♖xe4 ♜xa2 53.♖e6+ ♜f8 54.♖xb6 ♖e2 55.♖d6+ ♜f7 56.♖e6+

Black resigned

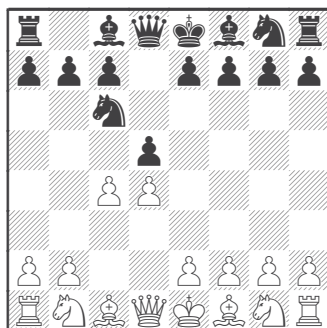
D07

Ivan Sokolov 2603

Richard Rapport 2675

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1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♜c6



Richard Rapport has a well-earned reputation for enterprising play and his frequent adoption of unusual opening lines. However lately he has become more conservative, choosing openings such as the Queen's Gambit, Exchange Variation – something I had actually prepared for. The Chigorin Defense came as a surprise and so I decided to opt for a seemingly unambitious positional approach. White aims for a Queen's Gambit, Exchange Variation type of pawn structure, where the knight on c6 will get in the way of Black's customary queenside play and he will need to spend a few tempi improving its position. From the perspective of opening theory, White's continuation is positionally sound and had previously been played by Kramnik on several occasions.

3.♜f3 ♞g4 4.♜c3 e6 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♞g5 6.♞f4 was Kramnik's choice: **6...♞d6 7.♞g3 ♜ge7 8.e3 ♜d7 9.a3 0-0 10.♞d3 a6 11.♞xd6! ♞xf3 (11...♖xd6? 12.♞xh7+) 12.♖xf3 ♖xd6 13.♖g3±**

♞fd8 14.b4 Now, compared to Queen's Gambit Exchange Variation positions the black knight is not well placed on c6. After **14...g6 15.♜a4 ♜c8 16.♞c1 ♞a7 17.0-0** White had the advantage and went on to win in V.Kramnik 2772 - N.Short 2642, Dresden 2008.

6...♞e7 7.♞xe7 ♜gxe7 8.e3 0-0 9.♞e2 ♖d6 10.♞c1 ♞ae8 11.0-0 Over the next few moves, Black has to spend time regrouping his pieces.

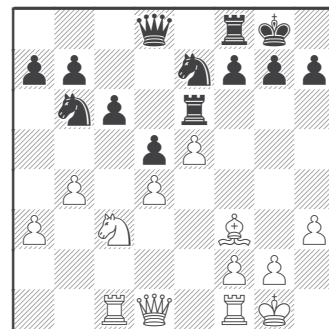
11...♜c8 12.b4 ♜b6 13.a3 ♞e6 14.h3 ♞xf3 14...♞h5 15.♜d2 ♞xe2 16.♜xe2±.

15.♞xf3 Here Black has to move his knight from c6 so as to be able to place his pawn on that square and establish a Queen's Gambit, Exchange Variation/ Carlsbad type pawn structure. However, this allows White to carry out a pawn advance in the center.

15...♜e7 16.e4! 16.♜b5? ♖d7 17.♜xc7?? is a blunder, allowing **17...♞c6** winning the white knight.

16...c6 16...dxe4?? is met by **17.♜xe4**, with **♜c5** to follow, winning at least a pawn.

17.e5 ♖d8

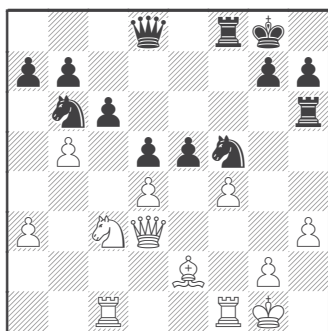


White is better here, however his advantage is considerably smaller than what I thought it was during the game. I felt the time had come to play aggressively and advance, but I underestimated Black's capacity to generate dangerous counterplay.

18.♞e2 This move is aimed at preventing the thrust **...♜c4** and moreover to be able to push f2-f4, thereby gaining ground on the kingside. The more conservative **18.♜a4** would probably have been a smarter choice, maintaining a safe advantage for White. However, **18.♞g4**, trying to provoke **...f5** so that Black will not have a future **...f6** as he plays in the game, is probably not that clever because of **18...f5 19.♞e2 f4∞.**



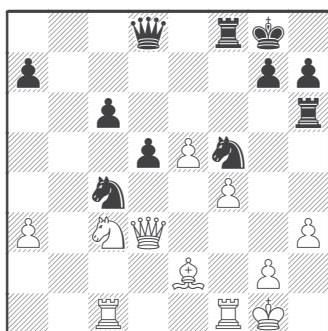
18...♖h6 19.b5 f6! 20.f4 ♘f5 21.♗d3 fxe5



I was no longer as happy as I was a few moves ago! Black is now generating serious counterplay and in such situations Richard is a particularly dangerous and tricky player! Here I sank into deep thought, deciding how to recapture.

22.dxe5 When playing 18.♗e2, my initial plan was 22.fxe5 but here, upon closer inspection, I rejected it because I now realized that after 22...♗g5 Black has sufficient counterplay, e.g. 23.♗g4 (or 23.♗f3 ♗g6 24.bxc6 bxc6 25.♗d3 ♗d7) 23...♗e3! (23...♗e3+ 24.♗xe3 ♗xe3 25.♗xf8+ ♗xf8 26.♗f3±) 24.♗xf8+ ♗xf8 25.bxc6 bxc6∞.

22...♗c4 23.bxc6 bxc6

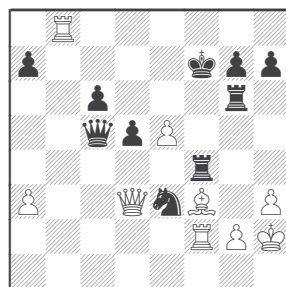


In this position Black has tactical resources, whereas I never get to roll my pawns on the kingside. Objectively, the position is in a state of dynamic balance and may be assessed as about equal. Nevertheless I think it is fair to say that entering such a position is one of the worst things I could have done against such an exceptionally gifted tactician as Richard Rapport!

24.♗d1 ♗g6 25.♗g4 ♗b6+ 26.♗f2 ♗fe3 27.♗xe3 ♗xe3 Though White still has sufficient resources Black has

tactical threats. So the position is still dynamically balanced. However time pressure was starting to play a role and I was the one to slip...

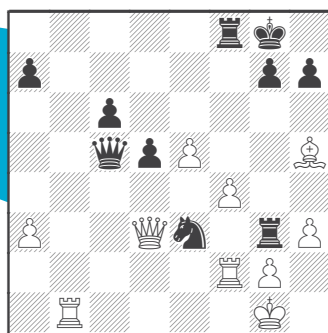
28.♖b1 28.♗h5? would be a blunder because of 28...♗xg2! 29.♗xg6 ♗xf4 30.♗f3 ♗xh3+ 31.♗xh3 ♗xf2+ 32.♗h1 hxg6 33.♗e6+ ♗f7 34.♗xf7+ ♗xf7 35.♗xc6 ♗e8 winning. On the other hand 28.♗f3 would have likely led to a draw by repetition of moves after 28...♗xf4 29.♖b1 ♗c5 30.♖b8+ ♗f7 31.♗h2



31...♗e6 32.♗e8+ ♗f7 33.♖b8 ♗g4+ 34.hxg4 ♗xf2 35.♗xd5+ ♗e7 36.♖b7+ ♗f8 37.♖b8+. In fact the move ♗f3 was good and even necessary at several points in the future, but I went on to miss these opportunities and eventually play the move at the wrong moment.

28...♗c5 29.♗h5 29.♗f3 ♗xf4 would have transposed to the above-mentioned line with 28.♗f3. In reply to the text move, 29...♗h6 would have led to unclear consequences after 30.♗e2 ♗h4 31.♖b3 ♗c4 32.♗g4 ♗xe5. Although Black has won a pawn, as a consequence White is now the one with the threats and has good compensation, e.g. 33.♗e6+ ♗h8 34.♗g3 ♗h6 (34...♗g6 35.♗g4∞) 35.f5♖ ♗f7 36.♖b7.

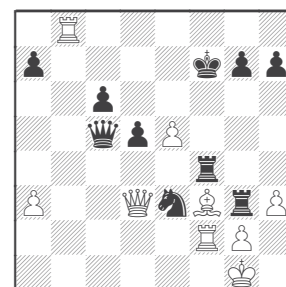
29...♗g3



Here it was clear to me that my bishop needed to go to f3. But time pressure was

already making its presence felt... I was about to play 30.♗f3, but then, just as I was about to touch the bishop, I thought "Hey, wouldn't it be smart to first push 30. e6... My opponent will probably reply ...g6 and then I can retreat my bishop to f3? Yes, it is smart! Black's king position will be weakened and my pawn on e6 will give me more tactical chances!"

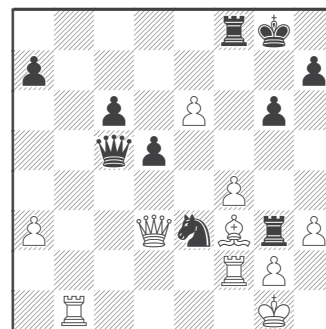
So, I played **30.e6?**, when instead 30.♗f3 would have most probably led to a draw: 30...♗xf4 (30...♗f5 31.♖bb2; 30...♗xg2 31.♗xd5+ cxd5 32.♗xg3 ♗xf4 33.♗h2±) 31.♖b8+ ♗f7



32.♗xh7 (but not 32.♗h5+?? g6 33.♗xf4+ ♗f5+ 34.♗d4 ♗xd4+ 35.♗xd4 ♗xd4+!) 32...♗c1+ 33.♗h2 ♗xf3 and this adventurous game would have ended by perpetual check: 34.♗h5+ ♗e6 35.♗e8+ ♗f5 36.♗xf3+ ♗xf3 37.♗h5+ ♗e6=.

30...g6 All according to plan, so now I played my intended...

31.♗f3



...only to realise that after **31...♗xg2**, due to my stupidity of allowing the inclusion of the moves 30.e6? g6, White no longer has ♗xd5 with check.

White resigned ■



THERE ARE FOUR
TYPES OF DECISIONS
YOU CAN TAKE IN
CHESS. THESE PAGES
PROVIDE TRAINING IN
ALL OF THEM.

Aagaard's ² ALL-ROUND TRAINING

by **GM Jacob Aagaard**

01

TRAINING IN AUTOMATIC DECISION MAKING

There is only one move.

ACTION

Candidates check. Is there only one option?

TRAINING

Candidates. Practice finding additional ideas.

02

SIMPLE DECISIONS

Positions without much to calculate.

ACTION

Quick decision making. Can often be played on feeling.

TRAINING

Train using the three questions:
1. Where are the weaknesses?
2. What is the opponent's idea?
3. Which is the worst placed piece?

03

CRITICAL MOMENTS

Moments where you sense that the difference between the best and other moves is high.

ACTION

Accurate calculation. Don't rely on intuition. Work it out; no guessing.

TRAINING

Practice calculating difficult tactics.

04

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

Complex positions that cannot be conclusively worked out.

ACTION

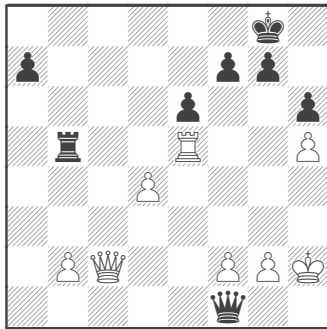
Use all your tools, from general considerations and three questions, to deep calculation.

TRAINING

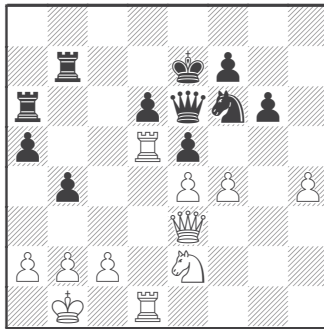
Analyse games deeply, look at the games by the best players, solve difficult strategic exercises.

01 TRAINING IN AUTOMATIC DECISION MAKING

CANDIDATES 1



CANDIDATES 2



CANDIDATES 3

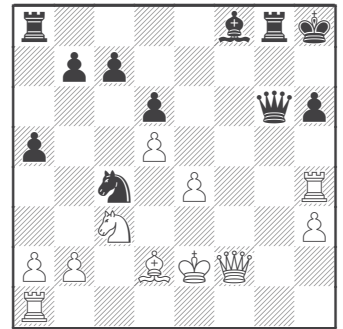
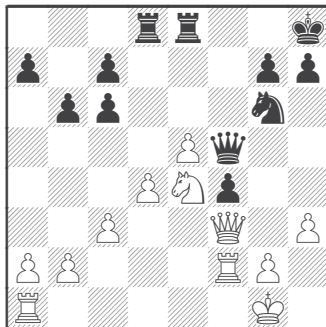


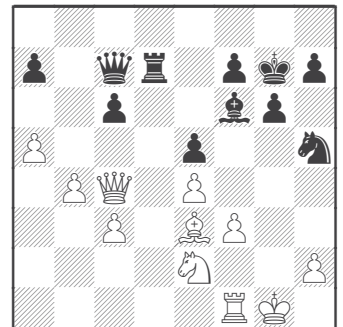
Photo by David Liada

02 SIMPLE DECISIONS

WEAKNESSES

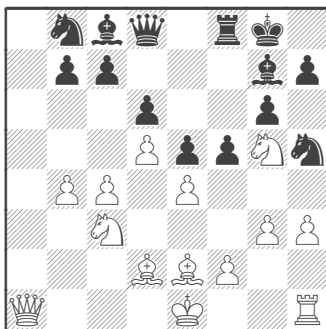


WORST PLACED PIECE

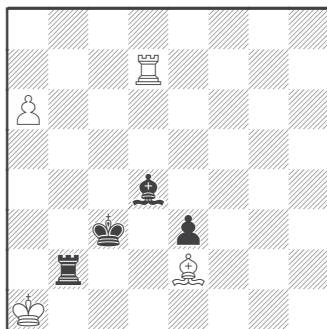


03 CRITICAL MOMENTS

PROPHYLAXIS

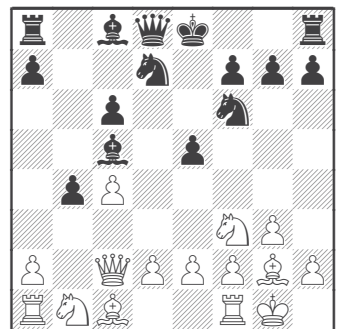


CRITICAL MOMENT



04 STRATEGIC DECISIONS

STRATEGIC DECISIONS



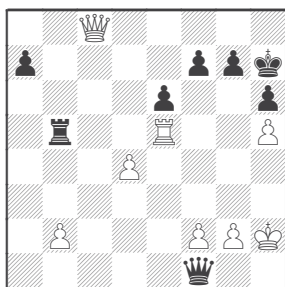
CANDIDATES 1

Mamedyarov 2797 – Kuzubov 2688
World Cup, Tbilisi 2017

Although it was move 39, one would expect a top GM to see a pin like this. But even when I have given strong players some time, they have found this simple manoeuvre quite tricky to spot.

After **39.♖c5? ♜b8!** Black was OK and later won the game when White overpressed.

39.♖c8+ ♔h7



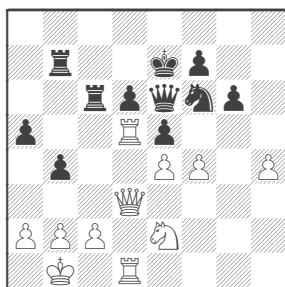
40.♖a6! would pin and win the black rook. Yes, Black can give some annoying checks and White will have to dance his king to safety. I don't know about you, but I dance like a butterfly when my pockets are full of gold.

CANDIDATES 2

Areshchenko 2645 – Demchenko 2650
World Cup, Tbilisi 2017

White is a little better in a number of ways, but there is only one direct win. Areshchenko missed it and later lost the game, playing:
27.♞d3?±

27.♞d3! wins, as the threat to the rook on a6 makes the rook on d5 immune. Black has to stay on the 6th rank with the a6-rook, as ♞xd6 would hurt. And after 27...♞c6 White has...



28.♞xe5! ending the game in a heartbeat. (28.♞xe5!? dxe5 29.♞xe5! also wins, but this is a poorer way to do the same thing.)

CANDIDATES 3

Erdos 2619 – Amin 2699
World Cup, Tbilisi 2017

It is a giveaway that White's chances include bringing the rook on a1 to g1. So, it is the first we look at. 33.♞g1?! is tempting of course, as it does win the queen, but the position after 33...♞xg1 34.♞f6+ ♞g7 35.♞xh6+ ♔g8 36.♞e6+ ♞f7 37.♞g4+ ♞xg4+ 38.hxg4 ♞g7 39.g5 ♔f8 is not quite winning yet.

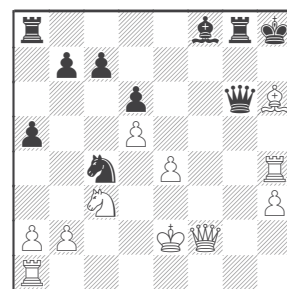
White retains the better chances, but the game goes on.

The game went: **33.♞g4?** I am not sure why Erdos played this move. Did he not sense that he had tactical chances? An in-depth explanation would be wonderful!

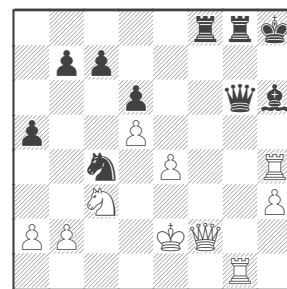
33...♞h5 34.♞f6+?! An odd choice. 34.♞ag1 was about even.

34...♞g7 35.♞h4 The game was later drawn, but here White has more questions to answer.

The winning combination starts with **33.♞xh6!!**



After 33...♞xh6 34.♞g1 the rook joins the attack with a gain of tempo at the right moment. (Black cannot play 34...♞xg1 on account of 35.♞xh6+ ♔g7 36.♞f6#) 34...♞af8 is all there remains, hoping to get two rooks for the queen.



But White has **35.♞xf8!** winning.



Grandmaster **Jacob Aagaard** was the 2007 British Champion, co-founder of the number one chess publishing house, *Quality Chess*, and author of many chess books, including the *Decision Making in Chess* series with Boris Gelfand.

Jacob trained with Mark Dvoretsky and now helps GMs of all levels maintain and improve their level, through coaching and his six-volume series of book, *Grandmaster Preparation*. He is the only chess author to win all four major book awards.

WEAKNESSES

Bartel 2637 – Negi 2670
World Team Championship,
Khanty-Mansiysk 2017

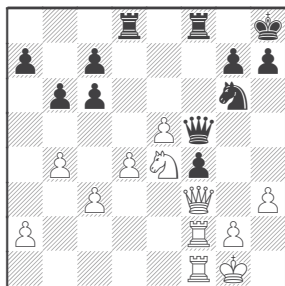
Black has a weakness on c6 and desperately wants to play ...c5. So you can call this weaknesses or prophylaxis. I think these terms are useful for understanding what is happening, but less useful for finding out what should happen. Once you understand what is going on, you will see that there is a great deal of intellectual freedom in understanding such ideas.

25.b4!± This is definitely the move. Black is tied down and has to find a different way to create counterplay.

25...♟f8! A nice attempt. Black wants to play ...♟h4, but also has a second idea.

26.♟e1?! Prevents the first idea, but misses the chance to tie down Black completely.

26.♟af1! would have been very strong.



Black cannot play ...♟h4, as the f-pawn would be hanging. And what else can he do? I cannot see it. White will now continue with a4-a5 and manoeuvre the queen to e2-c2, continuously strengthening his position, playing for long term exploitation of his advantage. Suddenly g4!? may even come.

26...♟e7! Transferring the knight to a much better square, from where it will still defend the f-pawn. 26...♟h4 27.♟g4! was White's idea.

27.♟h2 ♟d5± White is better, but Black's position has improved a lot. Even though we only looked at a brief moment in this very long game (which

eventually ended in a draw), I think we had the chance to learn something.

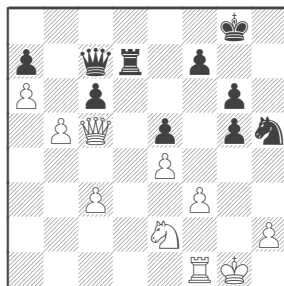
WORST PLACED PIECE

Karjakin 2773 – Nepomniachtchi 2751
Sinquefeld Cup, St. Louis 2017

The bishop on f6 has no function at this moment and is therefore best used as a bargaining chip. By exchanging it, Black can remove a lot of the white defense on the already weakened dark squares and secure a serious advantage.

25...h6! 26.a6 ♟g5± 27.♟xg5 hxg5 28.♟c5 ♟g8?! The crazy Stockfish engine thinks 28...♟f6!! with the idea ...♟g7-e6 is strongest. It might be right, but it is a very tough move to even think up. Still, it underlines the great potential of the black position.

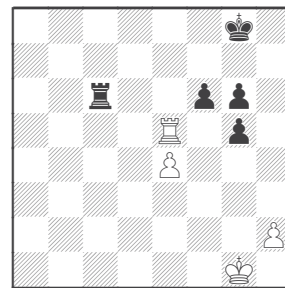
29.b5



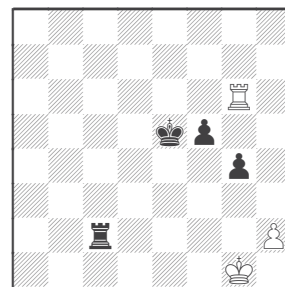
29...cxb5?! This leads to an endgame that the Russian Minister of Defense held quite comfortably.

29...♟d2! was the best winning attempt. With computers it is possible to find a defense in even the most hopeless looking positions. I think I have found one here: 30.bxc6! This piece sacrifice is necessary. (I have no belief in 30.♟xc6 ♟d8 31.♟f2 ♟d1+! 32.♟f1 ♟d6 33.♟b7 ♟d7 34.♟c6 ♟f4 35.♟xf4 gxf4, which leaves the white king desperately vulnerable. Black will continue with ...♟d2 and ...♟d7, with a winning attack. White can fend it off only after serious losses of material on the queenside.) 30...♟xe2 31.♟d1 ♟f6 32.♟b5 ♟e3 33.♟b7 ♟e8 34.♟xc7 ♟xc7

35.♟d7 ♟xa6 36.♟xa7 ♟xf3 37.♟xa6 ♟xc3 38.♟a5 ♟xc6 39.♟xe5 f6



This rook endgame arises almost by force and looks very promising for Black, but immediate action saves the day. 40.♟a5 ♟c4 41.♟a6 ♟f7 42.e5! f5 43.♟a7+ ♟e6 44.♟g7 ♟xe5 45.♟xg6 ♟c1+ 46.♟g2 ♟c2+ 47.♟g1 g4



It looks close, but if nothing else, White has 48.h3! ♟e4 (48...gxh3 is also a theoretical draw.) 49.hxg4 f4 50.♟b6 f3 51.♟f6 ♟e3 52.g5 ♟c1+ 53.♟h2 f2 54.g6 ♟c6 55.♟xc6! f1♟.

In practical terms this is very unlikely to happen and even here White looks like he has to find a lot of great defensive moves to hold. But with best play he does. This begs the question; do we mind if our opponents have such miracle saves? The correspondence player should mind, the otb player could not care less. It is never going to happen...

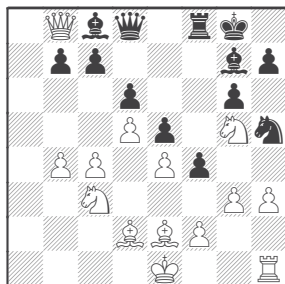
30.♟xc7 ♟xc7 31.♟b1 ♟c5 32.♟d1 ♟f4 33.♟xf4 gxf4 34.♟d7 ♟xc3 35.♟g2 ♟c2+ 36.♟g1 ♟a2 37.♟xa7 ♟g7 38.♟b7 ♟xa6 39.♟xb5 The game ended in a draw on move 60.

PROPHYLAXIS

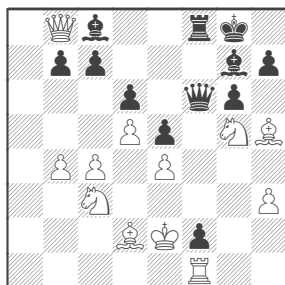
Urkedal 2541 – Kovalev 2641
World Team Championship,
Khanty-Mansiysk 2017

White has obtained an advantage, as is common in the King's Indian. But how do you retain it? You keep things under control to as great a degree as you can, and only allow the chaos you can control. I know that sounds simplistic, but it is the general strategy, in a battle that is being fought on its 64th year now...

17. ♖a8? f4!! White's idea is seen after 17... ♖a6? 18. exf5±, when Black cannot recapture the pawn. And after 18... ♖xb4 19. ♖e6 his position is gross.
18. ♖xb8



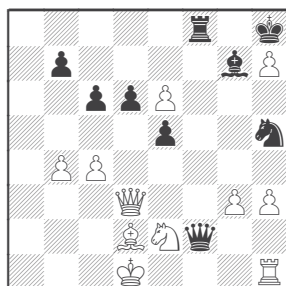
18... fxc3! 18... ♖xc5!? 19. ♖xc7 ♖xc3 is another interesting idea. 20. ♖g1!? (20. h4 ♖f6 21. fxc3 fxc3 22. ♖b6 g2 gives Black enough compensation to save the game.) 20... ♖xc3 21. ♖xb7± and White probably has better chances objectively in this mess, although no serious KID player would refuse to be Black here.
19. ♖xc3 19. fxc3 ♖xc3 20. ♖g1 ♖xe2 21. ♖xe2 h6 and Black is already playing for an advantage.
19... gxf2+ 20. ♖e2 ♖f6 21. ♖f1



The game can easily turn out to be very concrete around here. There are no totally forced lines, but a lot of forcing ones with a few sidelines. For example, the game could end with: 21. ♖f3 ♖h6! 22. ♖f1 ♖xg5 23. ♖xf2 ♖xd2 24. ♖xd2 ♖g5+ 25. ♖c2 ♖g3 26. ♖d1 ♖d7! 27. ♖a7 ♖xf3 28. ♖xf3 ♖xf3 29. ♖b8+ ♖f8 30. ♖xc7 ♖a4+ 31. ♖d2 ♖xd1 32. ♖xd1 ♖f1+ and Black gives a perpetual.

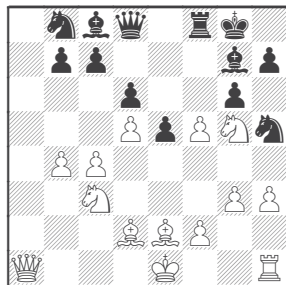
21... gxc3 22. ♖a7 h6 23. ♖xf2 ♖xf2+ 24. ♖xf2 ♖xf2+ 25. ♖xf2 hxc3 26. ♖xc3 ♖xc3 The endgame is equal, although Black managed to make the two bishops count and win it on move 53.

The crazy engine suggests 17. ♖e6?! ♖xe6 18. dxe6 as being a strong alternative. I do not like it. The main line seems to go like this: 18... ♖c6 (against 18... fxe4 you need to see 19. b5!± of course! Still things are far from obvious, and certainly not under control. But White is better.) 19. exf5 ♖d4 20. ♖b1 c6! 21. fxc6 ♖xe2 22. ♖xe2 ♖f6 23. gxc3 ♖h8 24. ♖d3! ♖xf2+ 25. ♖d1

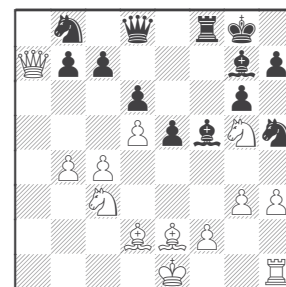


The machine would like to be White here. I would like a double Scotch, please...

The prophylactic solution is to remove Black's dynamism in the center. This is done by: 17. exf5!



17... ♖xf5 18. ♖a7!



From this excellent square the queen can both defend f2 and attack the black pawns. It is hard to find a way for Black to continue the game. White has many ideas, such as ♖e3, ♖e6, ♖g4, ♖xc3, g3-g4 and of course 0-0. All of them look very good for White, while Black has to come up with something extraordinary to keep going. 18... e4 19. ♖b5.

CRITICAL MOMENT

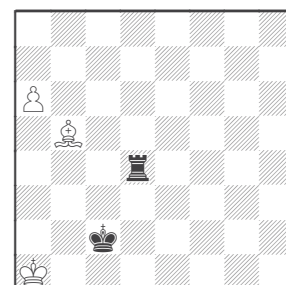
Cubas 2468 – Delgado 2603
Curitiba Open 2017

Black has a very promising position. With the many things hanging, it is obvious to us that accuracy at this moment could be very rewarding.

62... ♖b4? This looks very strong, but there is a defense.

63. ♖d1? Simply a blunder under pressure. 63. a7! ♖a4+ 64. ♖b1 ♖xa7 65. ♖d3+ ♖b4 66. ♖b2 will lead to the exchange of rooks imminently and then a draw.

63... ♖d2+ The obvious move, but Black could also win with 63... e2 64. ♖xe2 ♖c2+ 65. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 66. ♖b5

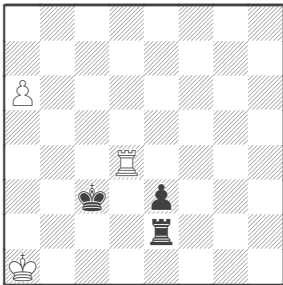


04 | STRATEGIC DECISION

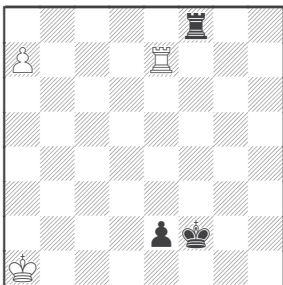
66...♔b3! It feels as if there is an idea for a study in there.
64.♕a2 ♕xd1 65.♕a3 e2!

0-1

The solution was to transfer into a simply won, but not obvious rook ending. 62...♖xe2 63.♖xd4



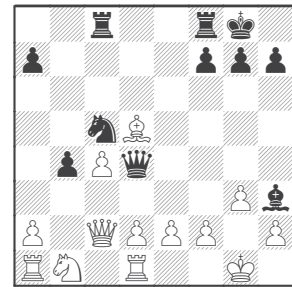
63...♖f2! decides. The rook has to be on the f-file, as the king later will have to hide from the checks by the white rook there.
 64.a7 ♖f8 65.♖d7 e2 66.♖e7 ♕d2 67.♖d7+ ♕e3 68.♖e7+ ♕f2



All move orders lead to here. And after 69.♖f7+ ♖xf7 70.a8 ♖e1 ♖+ Black wins in the attack, if not by exchanging queens... There are many wins, for example: 71.♕a2 ♖d2+ 72.♕b1 ♖b4+ 73.♕a1 ♕e3 74.♖e8+ ♖e7 75.♖a8 ♖b7! 76.♖e8+ ♕f2 White is out of checks.

Jones 2654 – Jobava 2713
 European Individual Championship, Minsk 2017

In a harmless looking position, Jobava manages to put his opponent under pressure right out of the opening with energetic play, involving some pawn sacrifices.



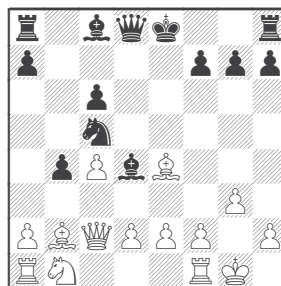
10...e4! 11.♖g5 This is the critical move and the only one you would have had to study carefully before making this decision.

It was probably safer to play 11.♖e1, when a position like 11...♕d4 (11...0-0!?) 12.♕b2 ♖c5 13.e3! ♕xb2 14.♖xb2 ♖b6 15.f3! would allow White to say that he has equalised.

11...♕d4 12.♕b2 ♖c5 Play has proceeded very directly. If he had his way, he would play ...♕xb2 and ...h6, pushing the knight to a bad square.

13.♖xe4?! The sad 13.d3 was necessary. Black gains the advantage after 13...exd3 14.exd3 0-0, but it is not a lot and the game goes on.

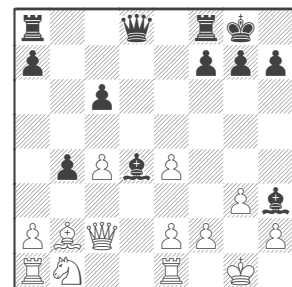
13...♖xe4 14.♕xe4



14...0-0! This is the key idea. White now finds himself under attack. The knight on b1 cannot easily join the game and there are direct threats made against him at this very moment.

15.d3 Sad necessity. 15.♕xc6 is met with continued energetic play: 15...♕h3! 16.♖d1 (16.♕g2 ♕xg2 17.♕xg2 ♖f6! and White has to give up a piece.) 16...♖c8 17.♕d5 ♖f6 18.♕xd4 ♖xd4

Black is basically winning, with the key tactical point being that the queen is not trapped after 19.e3 ♖xa1 20.♕c3 b3! and the extra rook should come in handy in the long run. 15.♕xh7+ ♕h8 16.♕d3 also does not work. A simple sample line could be 16...♕xb2 17.♖xb2 ♖xd3 18.exd3 ♕h3 19.♖e1 ♖xd3 20.♖b3 ♖ae8! and White is checkmated.
15...♖xe4 16.dxe4 ♕h3 17.♖e1



17...f5! Black continues his energetic play.

18.e3 18.c5 ♕h8 may be more accurate, but Black should win with good play all the same.

18...♕xb2 19.♖xb2 ♖xe4 20.♖d2 ♖e7 This structure is not defensible for White. There are too many weaknesses and Black can soften up the white kingside with ...h5-h4.

21.♖b3 ♖f6 22.c5 ♖af8 23.♖ac1?! White would not have survived the attack long term, but now it is over at once.

23...♖xf2! 24.♖xf2 ♖xf2 25.♕xf2 ♖f6+ The queen comes to b2.

0-1

Levon Aronian

by GM David Smerdon

FIVE MOMENTS OF TRUTH

There's something deliciously exciting about the FIDE World Cup. Perhaps it's the exhilaration of a knock-out competition, rivaling the fever of a tennis Grand Slam. Perhaps it's the sheer volume of non-stop mini-matches between almost all of the world's elite in a mixture of classical, rapid, blitz and even - gulp! - Armageddon games. Or perhaps it's the tantalizing knowledge that any of these players has a shot at a cherished Candidates spot - and with it, theoretically at least, a chance to play for the World Championship.

How Levon Aronian was first across the line!

Whatever the reason, my eyes are glued to the screen for the three weeks of these World Cups. There are always surprises, upsets and a controversy or two, and this year was no exception. Levon Aronian was a most deserving winner in my opinion (and not only because he married one of my compatriots a few days afterwards). But with so many players competing, a World Cup winner always needs a bit of fortune along the way, no matter how deserving. One hundred and twenty-seven players will no doubt have looked back at the crucial moments of their own downfalls and wonder "What if...?" But history always favors the victors, and it would be easy to forget that even Aronian had his fair share of lucky breaks, each of which could have completely changed the outcome of the tournament (and potentially the future World Championship). Looking back, here are my top five moments from the World Cup that helped get the winner across the line.

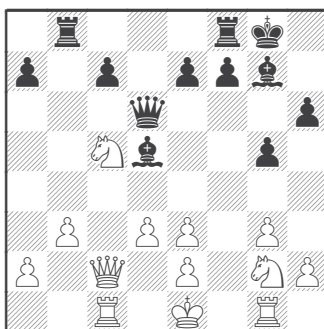


1. LEV ALMOST GETS SPRINGBOXED

The first what-if moment for Aronian happened as early as the very first classical game. On paper, the Armenian GM cruised through the opening round with a convincing 2-0 scoreline over South African “pretender” Daniel Cawdery. But the reality wasn’t quite so simple. Daniel has a reputation as a fearlessly competitive individual, both on and off the board, and he showed no signs of being intimidated by his heavyweight opponent when wielding the black pieces in the first game. His boldness was very nearly rewarded...

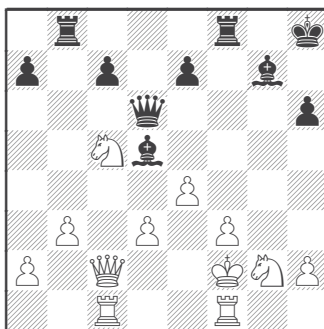
Levon Aronian	2799
Daniel Cawdery	2449

World Cup, Tbilisi (1.1), 2017



Black has given up a pawn to get the two bishops and deny White castling rights. This is the style Daniel is known for, and now he bravely goes straight for Lev’s king:

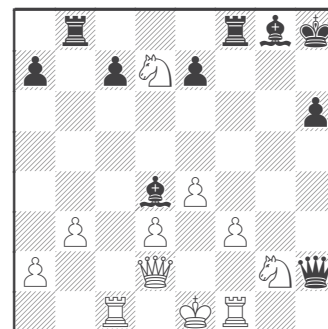
27...f5! 28.♔f2 ♕h8! 29.♖gf1 f4! 30.gxf4 gxf4 31.e4 f3 32.exf3



32...♖xh2 32...♗d4+ 33.♕e2 ♗f7!? was a dangerous try. Play might have continued

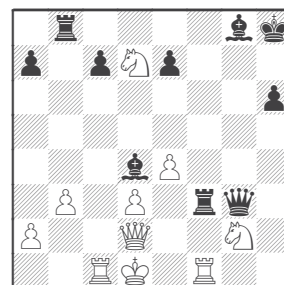
34.♕d1 ♗h5 35.♗e1 ♖f4 and White’s king is still a long way from an easy life.

33.♕e1! ♗d4 34.♖d2 ♗g8 35.♗d7

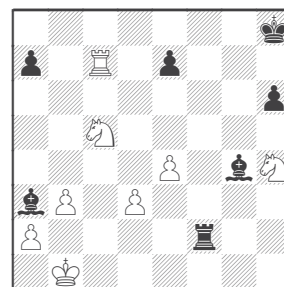


And here we are: Key Moment #1.

35...♖bd8?? How different the tournament might have gone (for both players!) if Daniel had found 35...♖g3+ 36.♕d1 ♖xf3!



Now, forced is 37.♖xf3 ♖xf3+ 38.♖e2 ♖xe2+ 39.♕xe2 ♗d8!, after which Aronian would have faced a very difficult defense. Objectively best is 40.♗c5 ♗f7 41.♗h4 ♖g8 with “just” an unpleasant endgame. But a much worse – and quite plausible – continuation would be 40.♖xc7? ♗e6 41.♗c5 ♗g4+ 42.♕d2 ♖f8 43.♗h4 ♖f2+ 44.♕c1 ♗b2+! 45.♕b1 ♗a3



...when the best White can do is try to hold an objectively lost endgame with a couple of loose pawns for a piece after 46.♗g6+ ♗h7 47.♗xe7

♖f1+ 48.♙c2 ♖c1+ 49.♙d2 ♖xc5.

36.♜xf8 ♖xf8 37.♖c6 ♙h7 38.♙d1
♙f7 39.♜f4

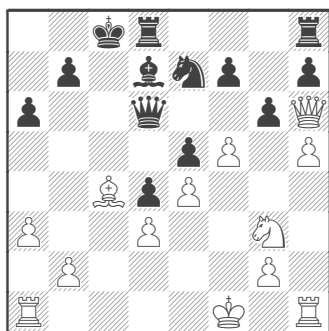
Black resigned

2. MAXIME'S KINGHIT

Aronian's half of the draw was the tougher one, featuring the big names of Carlsen, Kramnik, Giri, Grischuk and previous finalists Karjakin and Svidler – all players who, surprisingly, Aronian never had to face! The reason for this is that other players, chiefly Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Vassily Ivanchuk, did a lot of the dirty work for him. In the quarter-finals, Maxime knocked out the dangerous Peter Svidler in their tie-breaks with one of the most widely-praised moves of the tournament.

Peter Svidler	2751
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	2804

World Cup, Tbilisi (5.4), 2017



Peter has played a very ambitious middlegame so far, knowing full well that a win here would see him through to the semifinals and just one match away from a Candidates berth. 21.h5?! keeps the pressure on, and it's hard to see how Black can simultaneously deal with his king on the open c-file, the pressure on g6 and the annoying pins on the black queen (and potentially the rook on h8). But just when I was losing faith in Black's position, Maxime pulled out the move of the tournament:

21...♙c7!! Black not only foregoes

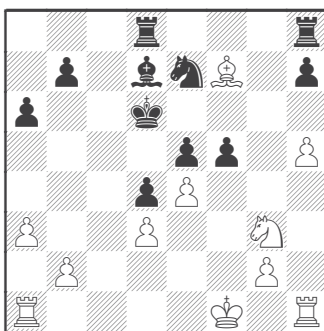


▲ Peter Svidler.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

evacuating his king on the c-file, but even advances it! But the point of this amazing move, which completely turned the tables in this contest, is clear: Black defends his queen and thus threatens to capture on f5. Meanwhile, if White tries to deal with the pressure by his own capture on g6, then suddenly the f-file opens up and White's king will start to feel the heat. The more you stare at the position, the more it all makes sense...

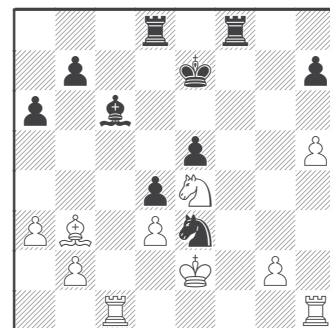
22.♙xf7 22.♖c1 gxf5! demonstrates a key point: Black has nothing to fear from the discovered checks. 23.♙xf7+ ♙c6 24.♙xd6+ ♖xd6 and Black has a pleasant endgame.

22...gxf5 23.♙xd6+ ♙xd6



24.exf5 24.♙e2 f4 25.♙f1 was more resilient.

24...♜xf5 25.♙e4+ ♙e7 26.♙b3
♙e3+ 27.♙e2 ♙c6 28.♖ac1
♙hf8



29.♖h3? White unravels.

29...♜xg2 30.♖xc6 bxc6 31.♖g3
♙f4+ 32.♙e1 ♖b8 33.♖g7+
♙d8 34.♙f7 ♖b7

White resigned

3. A DUBOVIOUS ENDGAME

The incumbent World Cup champion Sergey Karjakin was knocked out by young-gun Daniil Dubov, who many had pegged as a strong underdog for the tournament. Paired in the round of 16, Aronian and Dubov drew an exciting first classical game. In the second, Aronian had the white pieces and produced a masterclass against the Gruenfeld, exchanging into a winning rook-and-bishop endgame and cruising, apparently, through to the next round. The only obstacle was one obstinate bishop...

D85

Levon Aronian	2799
Daniil Dubov	2666

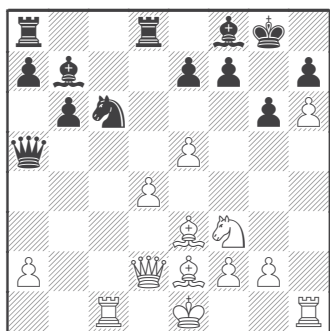
World Cup, Tbilisi (4.2), 2017

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 g6 3.♙f3 ♙g7 4.♙c3
d5 5.cxd5 ♜xd5 6.e4 ♜xc3 7.bxc3
c5 8.♙e3 0-0 9.♙e2 b6 10.♙d2 cxd4
11.cxd4 ♙b7 12.e5 ♜c6 13.h4!?

A logical attacking move against the Gruenfeld, in which Black often lacks kingside defenders.

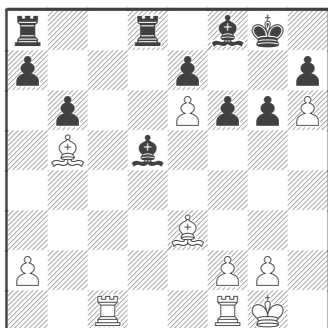


13...♔d5 14.h5 ♖fd8 15.♖c1
♗a5 16.h6!? ♕f8



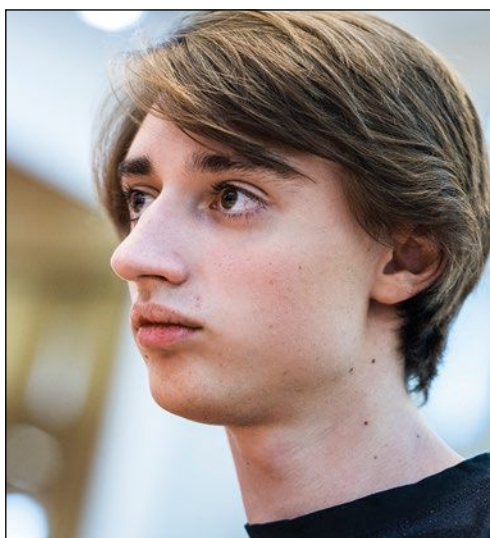
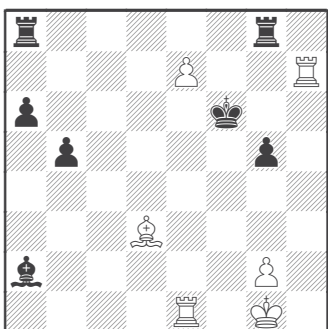
17.e6! A deep and creative concept. Aronian finds a nice “positional” sacrifice that will see Black on the defensive, well into the endgame. I’m not sure it’s completely correct, but practically speaking Black’s task is unpleasant.

17...f6 18.0-0 ♔xd2 19.♕xd2
♜xd4 20.♜xd4 ♖xd4 21.♕e3 ♖dd8
22.♕b5! ♕d5



23.♕d7 An unusual outpost!

23...g5 24.f4 ♕xh6 25.fxg5 ♕g7
26.♕d4 fxg5 27.♕xg7 ♜xg7 28.♖f7+
♜g6 29.♖xe7 ♖f8 30.♖e1 ♕xa2
31.♕b5 a6? 32.♕d3+ ♜f6 33.♖xh7 b5
34.♖h6+ ♜e7 35.♖h7+ ♜f6 36.e7 ♖g8

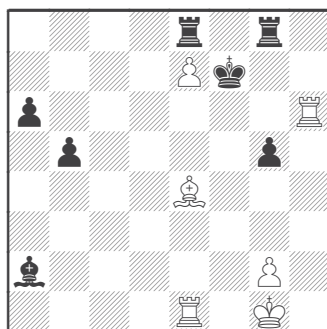


Daniil Dubov. ▲
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

37.♖h6+ 37.♕e4! wins.

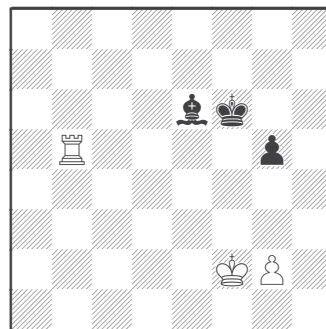
37...♜f7 38.♖h7+ 38.♕h7! is another missed win from the time scramble.

38...♜f6 39.♕e4 ♖ae8 40.♖h6+ ♜f7



41.♕c6 41.♕f3! g4 42.♕c6! – compare with the game...

41...♕c4! 42.♕xe8+ ♖xe8 43.♖xa6
♖xe7 44.♖xe7+ ♜xe7 45.♜f2 ♜f7
46.♖b6 ♕e6 47.♖xb5 ♜f6

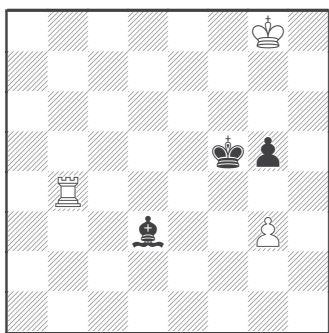


If Black already had his pawn on g4 (see the note to move 41), the win would be trivial. As it is, White’s task to infiltrate Black’s defensive setup isn’t easy at all. The table-bases say it’s a forced mate in 47 moves – well, go on, you try it!

48.♜f3 ♕f5 49.♖c5 ♕d3 50.♜e3 ♕f5
51.♜d4 ♕b1 52.♖c1 ♕g6 53.♖c6+
♜g7 54.♜e5 ♕b1 55.♖a6 ♕c2 56.♖d6
♜f7 57.♖f6+ ♜g7 58.♖f2 ♕b1 59.♖b2
♕d3 60.♖d2 ♕b1 61.♜e6 ♕e4 62.♖e2
♕d3 63.♖d2 ♕e4 64.♜e5 ♕b1
65.♖d4 ♜f7 66.♖a4 ♕c2 67.♖a5 ♕b1
68.♖c5 ♜g6 69.♖c1 ♕d3 70.♖d1 ♕c2
71.♖d2 ♕b1 72.♜e6 ♕e4 73.g3 ♕b1
74.♖b2 ♕d3 75.♜e7 ♕e4 76.♖b6+
♜g7 77.♖b5 ♜g6 78.♖b4 ♕c2 79.♜f8
♜f6 80.♜g8 ♕d3 81.♖d4 ♕c2
82.♖d2 ♕b1 83.♖f2+ ♜g6 84.♖b2
♕d3 85.♖b6+ ♜f5 86.♖b4

David Smerdon is a grandmaster and seven-time Olympiad representative for Australia. He has written for many chess periodicals and websites, and recently published his first book entitled *Smerdon’s Scandinavian* (Everyman Chess). David works as a lecturer at the University of Queensland, having finishing his PhD in economics at the University of Amsterdam.

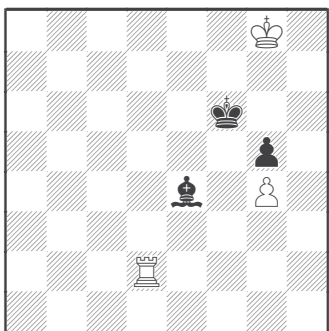




86...♔f6?? 86...♙e4! 87.♔g7 ♕f3
88.♔h6 ♕d1 89.♖b5+ ♔g4 90.♗xg5+
♔h3! is the key idea – Black follows
with ...♙g4 and takes the final pawn.

87.♗d4 ♕c2 88.♗d2 ♕b1 88...♙e4! =.

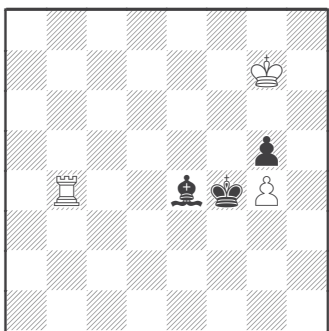
89.♗f2+ ♔g6 90.g4! ♙e4 91.♗d2 ♔f6



92.♗b2?? I guess this whole endgame was
a series of ‘key moments’, but as we all
know, it’s the last mistake that loses a game.
And here it is. 92.♗e2 ♔e5 93.♔f7 ♔f4
94.♗xe4+! ♔xe4 95.♔g6 ♔f4 96.♔h5 wins.

92...♙d3?? 92...♙e5 93.♔g7 ♔f4 94.♗b4
was probably Lev’s idea, intending to take on
e4. However... 94...♔xg4! 95.♗xe4+ ♔f3=.

93.♗b6+ ♔e5 94.♔g7 ♔f4 95.♗b4+ ♙e4



96.♗xe4+! ♔xe4 97.♔g6 **Black resigned**



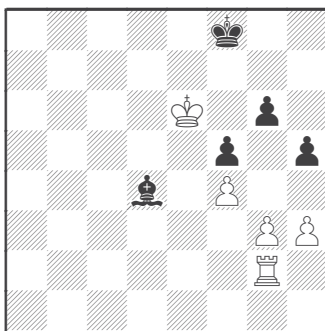
▲ Alexander Areshchenko.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

4. THE BISHOP'S REVENGE

“Bishops versus Rooks” was something of a mini-theme for the tournament, with some very instructive endgames appearing across the boards. Before we get to the next pivotal moment, here are two nice examples of a textbook endgame that most chess players will have to face at least once in their careers.

Alexander Areshchenko	2652
Anton Demchenko	2645

World Cup, Tbilisi (1.4), 2017



This textbook endgame arose in the finale of a gripping match between these

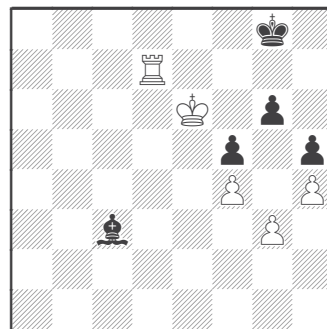
two exciting grandmasters. Areshchenko pulled off an outrageous endgame swindle in the classical games to even make it to the tie-breaks, and here he shows outstanding technique to progress to the next round. Despite his material advantage, it’s not at all trivial for White to break down Black’s structure. After a long period of maneuvering (which either meant increment-gaining or just trying to work out what to do), Areshchenko makes the break:

76.g4! fxc4 77.hxc4 ♙e3 78.gxh5
gxh5 79.f5 h4 80.f6

Black resigned

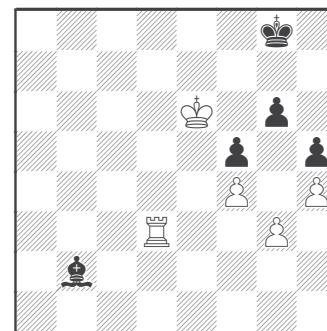
Richard Rapport	2675
Wei Yi	2753

World Cup, Tbilisi (2.3), 2017



Ah, but surely with the white pawn already on h4, White is clean out of breaks, right? In fact, the position is still winning, as you’ll discover from any good endgame textbook. In the battle of two of the world’s youngest super-GMs, the Hungarian demonstrates the winning technique:

58.♗d3 ♕b2

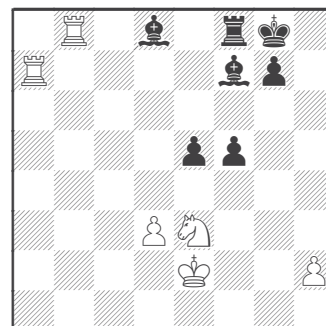




▲ Richard Rapport vs. Wei Yi.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

move. Maxime was in danger of getting positionally squashed, but instantly his structure starts to look a lot healthier.

17. ♖xb5 cxb5 18. ♜e3 ♞b7 19. f3 b4!
20. ♙b2 ♜a6 21. g4 h5 22. a3 ♙d8
23. ♞a4 hxc4 24. axb4 ♜xb4 25. ♞xa7
♞xa7 26. ♞xa7 gxf3 27. ♜f2 fxe2
28. ♜xe2 ♙e6 29. ♙c3 ♙xb3 30. ♞b1
♙f7 31. ♙xb4 cxb4 32. ♞xb4 f5 33. ♞b8



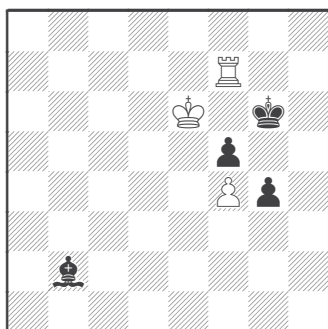
Alexander Grischuk 2783

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave 2804

World Cup, Tbilisi 2017

59. g4!! hxc4 60. h5 ♜g7 60... gxc4
61. ♜xf5 wins both pawns.

61. ♞d7+ ♜h6 62. hxc6 ♜xc6 63. ♞f7

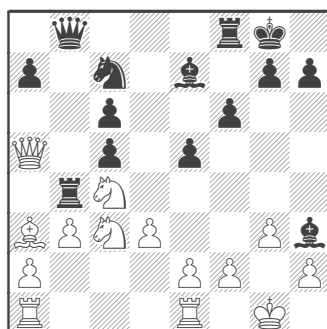


63... ♙c1 63... ♜h5 64. ♜xf5 ♜h4
65. ♞h7+ ♜g3 66. ♜e4 is straightforward
enough.

64. ♞xf5 ♜h6

Black resigned

Despite putting up tough fights, the bishops rarely had success against the rooks in these elite circles. But there was one exception, and it was a big one: Maxime's plucky pontiff managed to save the day and, in the process, knock out one of the Cup's key contenders, not to mention one of the best blitz players in the world.

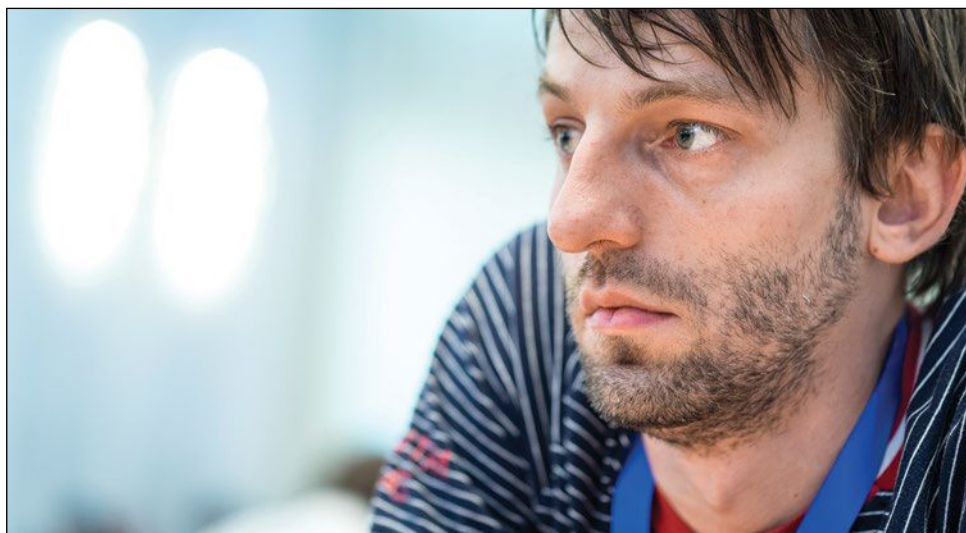


16... ♞b5! A great practical decision, which, incidentally, is also the best

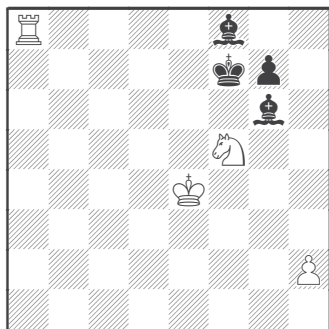
33... e4?? Losing, but from here Maxime starts to play very resourcefully. 33... f4! 34. ♜g4 ♙e6! would have probably saved the players a lot of time, because 35. ♜xe5?! f3+! forces the drawing sequence 36. ♜xf3 ♙g4 37. ♞xd8 ♞xd8 38. ♜e3 ♙xf3 39. ♜xf3 ♞xd3+.

34. ♞aa8 34. ♜xf5 did work, surprisingly enough: 34... ♙h5+ 35. ♜e3 ♙g5+ 36. ♜xe4 ♞xb8 37. ♞xg7+ ♜f8 38. ♞xg5.

Alexander Grischuk. ▼
Photo by Lennart Ootes.



34...exd3+ 35.♔xd3 ♕e7 36.♘xf5
♕g6 37.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 38.♔e4 ♔f7



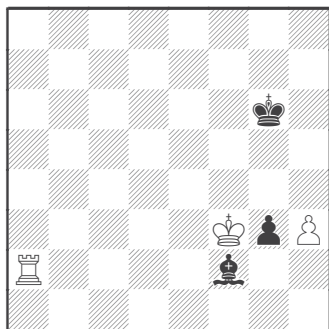
A huge moment for the tournament. Grischuk and MVL's epic, energy-zapping slugfest was decided by the latter's great practical decision at this moment. Although technically the resulting endgame is lost, Maxime realized that Black's position was irritatingly difficult to crack, especially for a blitz finish, and so he rolled the dice. Fortune favors the brave...

39.♔e5 ♕xf5!? A great practical decision.

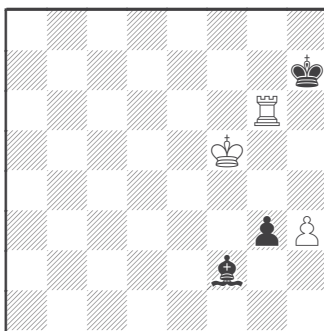
40.♔xf5 ♖g6+ 41.♔g5 ♕c5 42.♔h6!
The only winning move, leading to "Mate in 36". Seriously.

42...♕e3+ 43.♔h7 ♖g5! 44.♔h6 44.h3
was simplest, though simple it is not.

44...♕f4 45.♖a2 ♖g4+! 46.♔h5 ♖g3!
47.h3 ♕e3! 48.♔g4 ♕f2 49.♔f3 ♔g6
"Show me."



50.♖a5 ♔h6 51.♖b5 ♔g6 52.♖d5
♔h6 53.♖e5 ♔g6 54.♖b5 ♔h6
55.♖b4 ♔g5 56.♖g4+ ♔h6 57.♔e4
♕e1 58.♔f5 ♕f2 59.♖g6+ ♔h7
60.♔f6 ♕d4+ 61.♔f7 ♕f2 62.♔f6
♕d4+ 63.♔f5 ♕f2



64.h4?? White still wins with ♖g5 or ♖g4, but honestly, I don't understand any of the tablebase lines after this.

64...♕e1!= 65.h5 ♕f2 66.♔f4 ♕e1
Now there's no longer a win – and Grischuk is out.

67.♔f3 ♕f2 68.♔e2 ♔h8 69.♔f3
♔h7 70.♔f4 ♕e1 71.♔g4 ♕f2 72.♔f5
♕e1 73.♔f4 ♕f2 74.♔e5 ♕e1 75.♔f6
♕f2 76.♔f5 ♕e1 77.♔g5 ♕f2 78.♔f5
♕e1 79.♔e4 ♕f2 80.♔f3 ♕e1 81.♖e6
♕f2 82.h6 ♕c5 83.♔xg3 ♕f8 84.♔g4
♕xh6 85.♔f5 ♕d2 86.♔f6 ♔h6
87.♖c6 ♔h5 88.♔f5 ♔h4 89.♖c2
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♕b8 93.♖c3 ♕g3 94.♖xg3

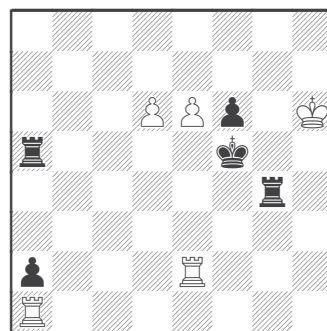
Draw

5. ARMAGEDDON

Despite the many twists and turns on the way to the semi-finals, however, the absolute champagne moment of Aronian's campaign was the semi-final match against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. The tie-breaks were a real show-stopper, not least because these two heavyweights were playing for practically their last chance at a Candidates spot. Some would argue that such a prestigious prize shouldn't be settled by something as juvenile as an Armageddon blitz game, and I think many of us wished to see both of these fine players in the final Candidates line-up... but as a spectator, who am I to disagree? The entertainment value was off the charts.

Levon Aronian	2799
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	2804

World Cup, Tbilisi (6.9), 2017



Let's jump forward straight to what was probably the biggest moment of the tournament: Maxime's final blunder.

54...♖a8?? There was a draw, and with it a Candidates spot, to be had for the Frenchman. But it required a very precise and surprising move: 54...♖aa4!!

Black ignores the racing white pawns and creates surprising counterplay against the white king. The first thing to note is that White can't yet push a pawn or capture on a2 because Black threatens mate in three, starting with ...♖g6+. Still, it surely feels that White should be able to parry the threat.



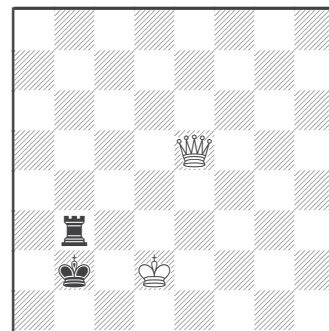
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Photo by Lennart Ootes.



R1	Aronian	Cawdery	2:0
R2	Hou Yifan	Aronian	2:4
R3	Aronian	Matlakov	4½:3½
R4	Dubov	Aronian	½:1½
Quarter-final	Aronian	Ivanchuk	1½:½
Semifinal	Aronian	Vachier-Lagrave	5:4
Final	Aronian	Ding Liren	4:2

▲ World Cup Tbilisi 2017, playing hall.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

♖c2+ 70.♔d3 ♖c3+ 71.♔d2 ♖b3
72.♜e5+



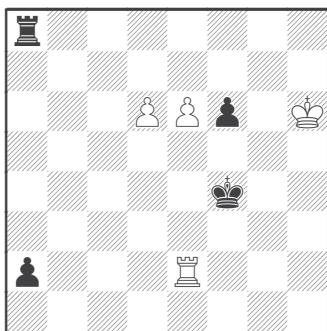
72...♔b1 73.♜d4 ♖h3 74.♜b6+ ♔a1
75.♜f6+ ♔a2 76.♜e6+ ♖b3 77.♔c2
♔a1 78.♜a6+

Black resigned

And with that – notwithstanding a few more twists and turns in the final – Aronian rode his luck all the way to the Championship. ■

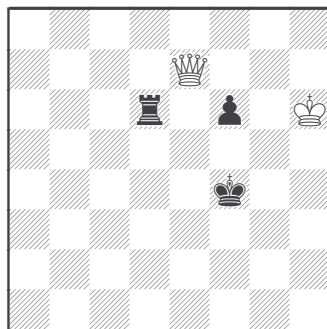
Incredibly, though, Black's activity is enough to save the game. 55.♖f1+ (55.♔h7 ♖h4+ 56.♔g7 ♖ag4+ 57.♔f8 ♖h8+ is a key detail; White has to concede a perpetual, because 58.♔e7?? ♖g7 is mate.) 55...♖gf4 56.♖xf4+ (56.♖xa2 ♔xe6) 56...♖xf4 57.♖e1 a1♜ 58.♖xa1 ♔xe6 draws.

55.♖f1+ ♖f4 56.♖xf4+ ♔xf4



57.♖xa2! From here, the win is smooth(ish) sailing.

57...♖xa2 58.e7 ♖d2 59.e8♜ ♖xd6
60.♜e7



“Mate in 32.” 60...♖d4 61.♜xf6+ ♔e3
62.♔g5 ♖d5+ 63.♔g4 ♖d4+ 64.♔g3
♖d3 65.♜e5+ ♔d2+ 66.♔f2 ♔c2
67.♜c5+ ♖c3 68.♜f5+ ♔b2 69.♔e2

AMERICAN GM SAM SEVIAN
ANNOTATES HIS MOST EXCITING
GAME IN TBILISI

ONE MOVE that almost gave me A HEART ATTACK

by **GM Sam Sevian**

At the World Cup you simply want to survive and at times have to pull your punches to try your luck in the next encounter, be it a rapid or a blitz. This is my game against former European champion, Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu. After 1-1, we had to play rapid games the next day. I managed to win the rapid portion 1½-½ with an overall 2½-1½ victory.



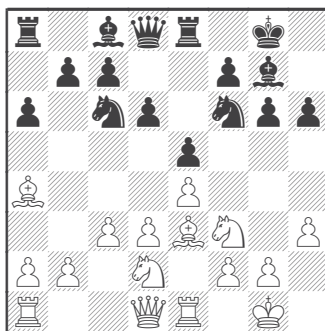
C77

Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu	2680
Sam Sevian	2620

World Cup, Tbilisi (1.2), 2017

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6
4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 I opt for
Steinitz-type positions against 5.d3.

6.c3 g6 7.0-0 ♙g7 8.h3 0-0 9.♙e3
h6 10.♘bd2 ♚e8 11.♙e1



We got to this position relatively quickly, and I started to think about the setup I'd like to choose.

11...d5?! After some thought I decided to take space immediately, but it was probably better to push his bishop back first: 11...b5 12.♙c2 ♙b7.

12.♙xc6! After 12.exd5 ♘xd5 13.♙xc6 bxc6 14.♘c4 f6 Black has dynamic compensation for the doubled pawn.

12...bxc6 13.♙a4! An important move, which I missed. Now after either ...♙d7 or ...♙b7 White will have the idea of playing ♘b3-c5 to attack the bishop.

13...♙d7 13...a5 14.♘b3! (14.♙xc6 ♙d7 15.♙b7 ♙b8 16.♙a7 ♙a8 17.♙b7=) 14...♙a6 15.♘c5±.

14.♙c2 ♘h5 Trying to start



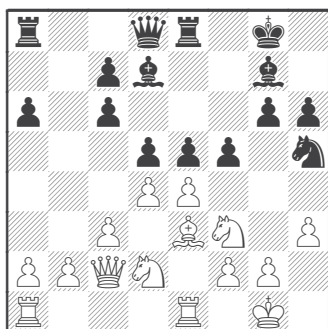
R1	Sevian	Nisipeanu	2½:1½
R2	Sevian	Li Chao	1½:2½

▲ Sam Sevian, World Cup 2017. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

counterplay with ...f7-f6, or ...♖f6 followed by ...♗f4.

15.d4 My opponent tries to trade all the central pawns to get a better endgame, but I had my own plans. 15.♗b3 was a more solid approach.

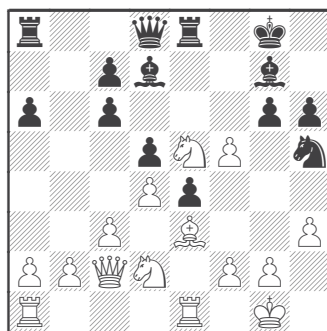
15...f5! I think he missed this move, because he immediately sank into deep thought.



16.exf5 16.exd5 e4 17.dxc6 ♗e6 18.♗e5

f4 19.♗xe4 (19.♗xg6 fxe3 20.♖xe3 ♗g5 21.♖xe4 ♗d5 22.♖g4 ♖xe3 23.♖xg5 hxxg5 24.fxe3 ♖e8 Black has a piece for three pawns, with the advantage.) 19...fxe3 20.♖xe3 ♗f4; 16.♗e5 f4 17.♗xd7 ♖xd7 since the white bishop is trapped.

16...e4 17.♗e5 If 17.f6 exf3 18.fxxg7 then 18...♗f5 and after taking on g7 Black should be fine.

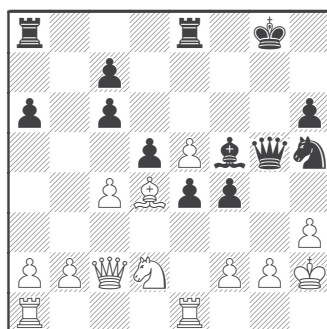


17...♗xe5! A very accurate move, whereas after the immediate 17...gxf5 White has 18.♖d1! ♗f6 19.♗b3+.

18.dxe5 gxf5 19.♗h2 19.♖d1 ♖h4! and Black's attack is rolling very quickly.

19...f4 20.♗d4 ♗g5 I decided to go for a quick attack on the g-file. The plan is to play ...♖e6-g6 and possibly even ...♗h7 followed by ...♖ag8. 20...♖h4 21.♗f3 ♖e7 22.e6 ♖xe6 23.♗e5 is also interesting, since after 20...♗f5 21.g4! fxxg3+ 22.fxxg3 ♗g5 23.♖e3 White has a nice blockade.

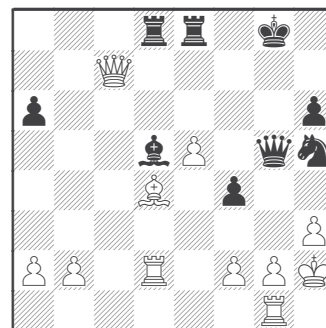
21.c4 ♗f5



22.cxd5?! Sacrificing a piece for a couple of pawns, in order to stop the black attack. 22.♖c3 ♖e6! (Black also has 22...♗g7 with the idea of 23...♗e6.)

23.cxd5 ♖g6 24.♖g1 cxd5 25.♖xc7 ♖h4! looks very dangerous.

22...e3 23.♖xc6 exd2 24.♖g1 ♖ad8 25.♖ad1 ♗e4 26.♖xd2 ♗xd5 27.♖xc7



After a relatively forcing line we have arrived at this position, where Black has an extra knight for three pawns, but since my knight is out of place I found a nice way to bring it into the game.

27...♗g3! With the sneaky threat of 28...♗f1+.

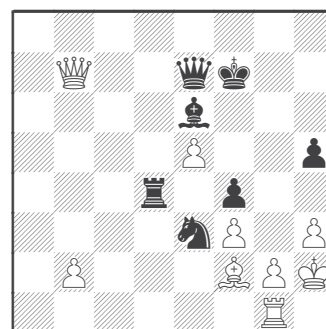
28.f3 ♗xa2 29.♗c3 ♗e6

Here we both had under five minutes, and needed to make eleven moves to get to the time control.

30.♖c6 30.♖xd8 ♖xd8 31.♖c6 was a better move order.

30...♖g6 Keeping both pairs of rooks on the board by 30...♖c8 31.♖xa6 ♗f5 was a bit better, but I just wanted to get to move 40.

31.♖xd8 ♖xd8 32.♖xa6 ♗f5 33.♗e1 h5 34.♖a5 ♖d5 35.♖a4 ♖d4 36.♖c2 ♖g5 37.♗f2 ♗e3 38.♖c6 ♗f7 39.♖b7+ ♗e7

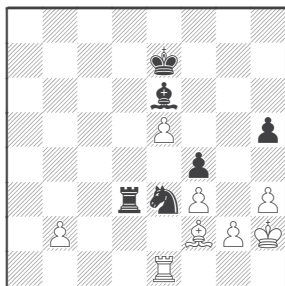


The critical moment comes on move 40,

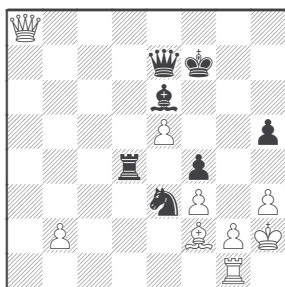


when both players were under one minute.

40. ♖b6 40. ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 41. ♖e1 ♖d3

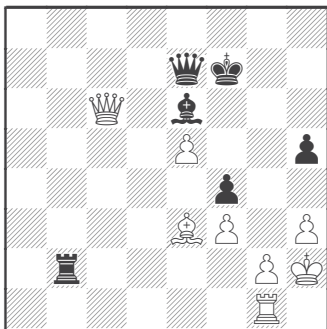


42. ♕xe3 (42. ♕h4+ ♔f7 43. ♕g5 ♖d2 44. ♕xf4 ♖xg2+ 45. ♔h1 ♖c2 46. ♔xg2 ♖xe1+ 47. ♔g3 ♖d3 48. ♕e3 ♖xb2 I think is a won endgame.) 42... ♖xe3 43. ♔g3 ♖b3 44. ♔f4 ♖xb2 45. ♖xe3 ♖xg2 46. h4 ♕d5 with good winning chances; 40. ♖a8!



...was probably the best, threatening 40. ♖h8, then 40... ♔g7 41. g3 ♖d2 42. gxf4+ ♔h7 43. ♖e4+ ♖f5 44. ♖g2 ♖f7+.

40... ♖b4 41. ♖c6 ♖xb2 42. ♕xe3



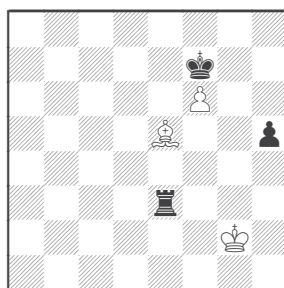
42... ♖h4! A nice trick, threatening 43... ♖xh3 mate.

43. ♔h1 43. ♖c7+ ♔g6 44. ♔h1 was better, avoiding ... ♖xh3, but maybe practically worse because I wouldn't spend any time here.



▲ Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu, World Cup 2017 Photo by Lennart Ootes.

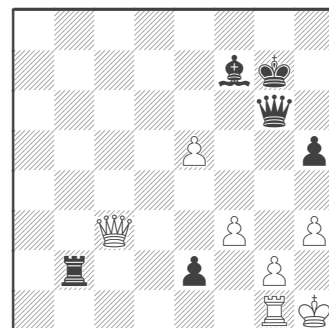
43... ♖xe3 After long thought, about 12 minutes, I choose the most natural move, as I could not find a win with 43... ♕xh3. However, I probably should have chosen this continuation since after 44. ♖f6+ ♖xf6 45. exf6 ♕xg2+ 46. ♖xg2 ♖xg2 47. ♕xf4 ♖f2 48. ♕e5 ♖xf3 49. ♔g2 ♖e3



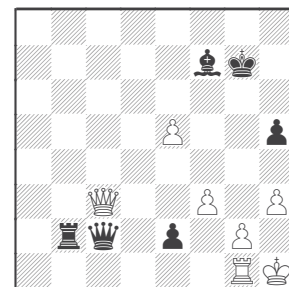
...one very logical line where Black wins is 50. ♕d4 ♖e4 51. ♕c3 ♖e2+ 52. ♔h1 (52. ♔f3 ♖a2 53. ♕e5 ♔e6 54. ♕d4 h4!-+; 52. ♔f1 ♖e3 53. ♕d4 ♖e4 54. ♕c3 ♖g4 and pushing the h-pawn.) 52... ♖e3 53. ♕d4 ♖d3 54. ♕e5 ♔e6 winning.

44. ♖c7+ ♖e7 45. ♖c3 ♖b3 46. ♖c2 ♔g7 47. ♖a1 ♖f7 Black also had 47... ♕f7 48. f4 ♖b7 49. ♖f5 ♖b6! and ... ♖g6 winning.

48. ♖e1 ♖g6 49. ♖c5 ♖b2 50. ♖g1 e2 51. ♖c7+ ♕f7 52. ♖c3



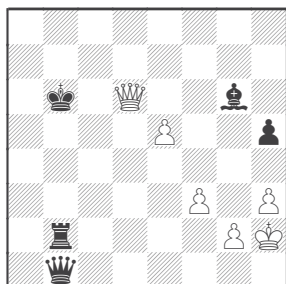
52... ♖c2? Low on time I miss the opportunity of playing 52... ♖c2!



53. ♖e3 (53. ♖e1 ♕g6! 54. ♖h4 ♖d1

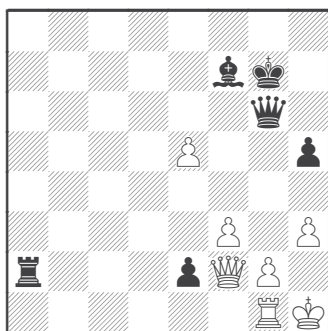


55. ♖f6+ ♔h7 56. ♗e7+ ♔g8 57. ♗f6
 ♗xg1+ 58. ♔xg1 e1 ♖+ 59. ♔h2 ♗b1
 60. ♗d8+ ♔f7 61. ♗f6+ ♔e8 62. ♗e6+
 ♔d8 63. ♗d6+ ♔c8 64. ♗c6+ ♔b8
 65. ♗d6+ ♔b7 66. ♗d5+ ♔b6 67. ♗d6+



67... ♔b5 68. ♗d5+ ♔b4 69. ♗d4+ ♔b3
 70. ♗d5+ ♔c3 71. ♗c5+ ♔d2 72. ♗d4+
 ♔e2; or 53. ♗xc2 ♗xc2 54. ♗e1 ♔g6
 55. ♔g1 h4+; or 53. ♗d4 e1 ♗) 53... ♗b1
 54. ♗g5+ ♔h7 etc.

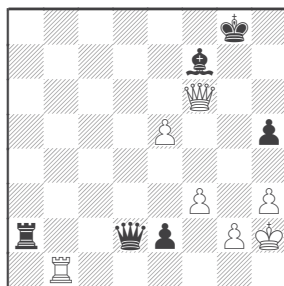
53. ♗e3 ♗a2 54. ♗f2



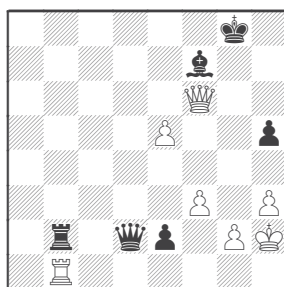
54... ♔h7? With a couple of minutes
 on the clock, this isn't an easy win. But
 54... ♗d2! 55. ♗e1 ♔c4! 56. ♗a7+ ♗f7

57. ♗a1 ♔g6! 58. ♗b1+ ♔g5! 59. ♗c1
 ♗f4 60. e6 ♔f6 is decisive.

55. ♗e1 ♗d3 56. ♔h2 ♗g6 57. ♗c5 ♗f5
 58. ♗e3 ♗d3 59. ♗c5 ♗d2 60. ♗e7+
 ♔h6 61. ♗f8+ ♔h7 62. ♗e7+ ♔g8
 63. ♗f6 ♗e8 63... ♔f7 64. ♗b1 (64. ♗xe2
 now loses to 64... ♗xe2 65. ♗g5+ ♔h7
 66. ♗f5+ ♗g6 67. ♗d7+ ♔h6)

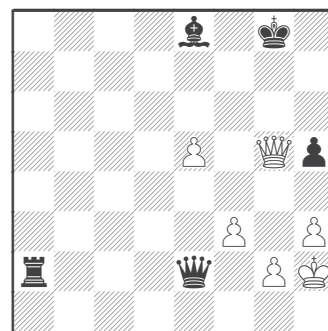


This move almost gave me a heart attack,
 as with one minute on the clock I might
 be getting mated. 64... ♗a8 (64... ♗b2

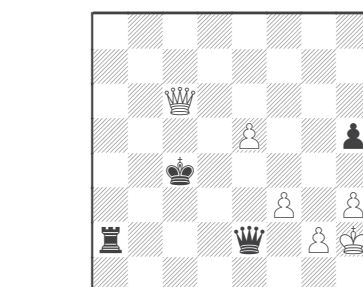


65. e6! ♗d6+ 66. f4 ♗xe6 67. ♗xb2 e1 ♗
 68. ♗xe1 ♗xe1 69. ♗e5) 65. f4 ♗d8
 66. ♗f5 ♗a6 is still good for Black but
 very hard to spot.

64. ♗xe2 ♗xe2 65. ♗g5+ ♔f8
 66. ♗h6+ ♔f7 67. ♗f6+ ♔g8 68. ♗g5+



68... ♔f8 With just about one minute
 left, I agreed to a draw. Black does have
 68... ♗g6 but I think it also entails a lot of
 risk since the black king is so exposed after
 69. ♗xg6+ ♔f8 70. f4, which seems better
 than 70. ♗f6+ ♔e8 71. ♗e6+ ♔d8 72. ♗d6+
 ♔c8 73. ♗c6+ ♔b8 74. ♗b6+ ♔a8 75. ♗c6+
 ♔a7 76. ♗c7+ ♔a6 77. ♗c6+ ♔a5 78. ♗c5+
 ♔a4 79. ♗d4+ ♔b3 80. ♗b6+ ♔c4 81. ♗c6+



81... ♔d3 82. ♗d6+ ♔e3 83. ♗b6+ ♔d2
 84. ♗d4+ ♔c1 85. ♗g1+ ♗d1.

69. ♗h6+

Draw



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Photo by Lennart Ootes

LET'S PLAY CAT AND MOUSE!

By **GM Vassily Ivanchuk**

Vassily Ivanchuk went all the way to the 5th round of the World Cup, where he was stopped by eventual overall winner, Levon Aronian. On this journey, he managed to eliminate such players as Kramnik and Giri. However, from the aesthetic point of view, Ivanchuk believes the following game should grab our attention. After two draws he played the first tie-break game against an opponent from Kazakhstan. It was cat and mouse play, where his white-squared bishop first had a heroic defensive role and then ultimately led a brutal counter-offensive on the very same flank.

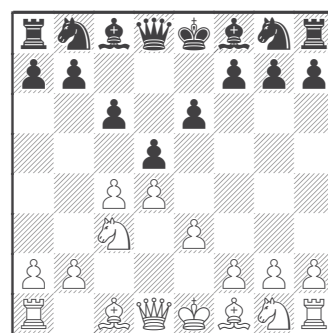
D45

Murtas Kazhgaleyev	2576
Vassily Ivanchuk	2728

World Cup, Tbilisi (1.3), 2017

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c6 4.e3

Kazhgaleyev has also employed the continuation 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♞c2!? several times here. In fact I myself tested this same line two rounds later in my match against Kramnik and obtained a very promising position after the opening.

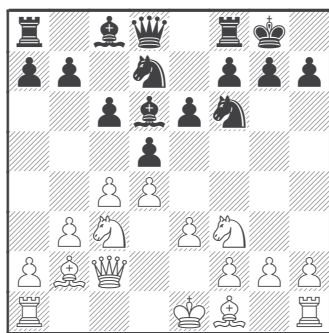


4...♘f6 Now we enter the field of the Meran Variation of the Slav Defense. Instead, a game of mine against Carlsen proceeded in the following fashion: 4...♙d6 5.♙d3 f5 6.♞c2 ♘f6 7.♘ge2 0-0 8.f3 ♘h8 9.♙d2 a6?! 10.c5! and White won in 61 moves, M.Carlsen 2770 - V.Ivanchuk 2746, Leon 2009.

5.♘f3 5.♙d2 g6 6.♙d3 ♙g7 7.♘f3 ♘bd7 was seen in my game vs Sashikiran at the Capablanca Memorial earlier this year. There followed 8.0-0 0-0 9.♞c2 ♙e8 10.♙fe1 a6 11.♙ad1 b5 12.cxd5 exd5 13.e4 b4 14.e5 bxc3 15.exf6 ½-½ V.Ivanchuk 2738 - K.Sasikiran 2669, Matanzas 2017.

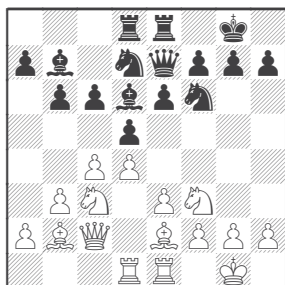
5...♘bd7 6.♞c2 ♙d6 7.b3 0-0 8.♙b2

R1	Ivanchuk	Kazhgaleyev	3:1
R2	Duda	Ivanchuk	2½:3½
R3	Ivanchuk	Kramnik	1½:½
R4	Ivanchuk	Giri	1½:½
Quarter-final	Aronian	Ivanchuk	1½:½



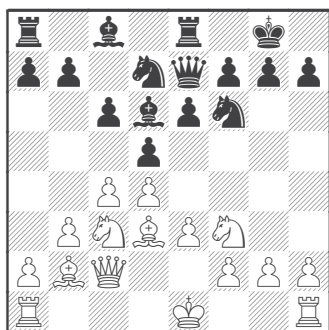
8...♞e8!? In the second classical game of our match, I opted for 8...e5 9.♞e2 e4 10.♞d2 ♞b8!?, but in the rapid I decided to try another approach.

9.♞d3 Upon 9.♞e2 I was ready to proceed 9...b6 (Also 9...dxc4 10.bxc4 e5 11.0-0 exd4 12.exd4 ♞f8 is quite often played here.) 10.0-0 ♞b7 11.♞ad1 ♞e7 12.♞fe1 ♞ad8



...which is a very fashionable setup nowadays.

9...♞e7



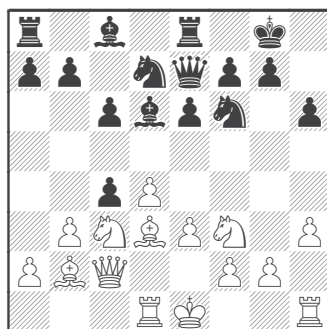
10.♞d1 This is a logical waiting move. Upon 10.0-0 Black can comfortably break in the center with 10...e5 11.dxe5 ♞xe5 12.♞xe5 (12.cxd5?! is rather risky for White, but the reply 11...e4 12.♞xe4 ♞xe4 13.dxc6, etc. needs more practical trials.) 11...♞xe5 12.♞xe5 ♞xe5 13.g3

dxc4, thereby solving any problems in the opening.

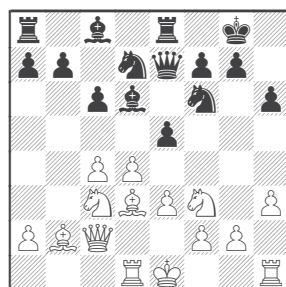
10...h6 Black waits too, although it was worth considering 10...e5 11.dxe5 ♞xe5 12.♞xe5 (12.cxd5!?) 12...♞xe5 13.cxd5 ♞g4!?!; or even 10...b6 11.0-0 ♞b7.

11.h3 Also here, upon 11.0-0 I intended to go 11...e5 12.dxe5 ♞xe5 13.♞xe5 ♞xe5 14.g3 dxc4 15.♞xc4 ♞e7 when I evaluated the ensuing position as roughly equal.

11...dxc4 This is the beginning of concrete play. The alternative was to develop the queenside by 11...b6.



12.♞xc4! White was practically forced to recapture with the bishop, since upon 12.bxc4 e5

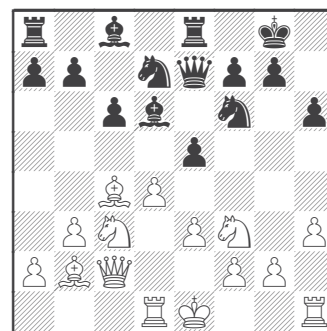


A) Black has excellent play, although perhaps it is worth trying the idea of 13.♞f5!? exd4 14.♞xd4 ♞a3 15.♞a1! ♞b6 with an unclear game. Despite having a weak pawn on c4, White hopes to create threats by invading with the knight on f5.

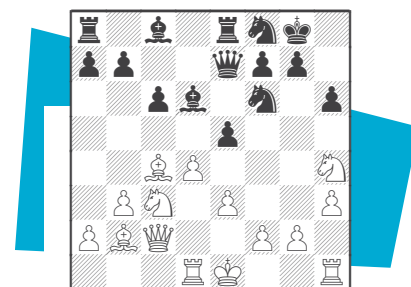
B) White's direct attempt 13.♞h4!? is probably met most simply by 13...♞f8!, although there is the very interesting idea of 13...exd4 14.♞f5 ♞f8 (or 14...♞e5) 15.♞xd6 ♞xd6

16.♞e2! ♞xe3!? 17.fxex3 ♞g3+ 18.♞f1 dxc3 19.♞xc3 ♞xe3, leading to a complicated position in which Black has his chances.

12...e5 Here it is already a matter of taste, since 12...b5 followed by ...♞b7 looks fully acceptable for Black.



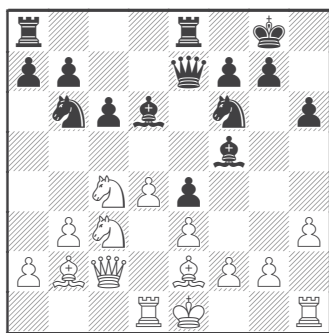
13.♞e2?! This bishop retreat looks somewhat passive. I expected 13.♞h4! ♞f8 (13...♞b6 14.♞g6 ♞c7 15.♞xe5 is in White's favor; while 13...e4? 14.♞f5 ♞f8 15.♞xd6 ♞xd6 16.d5 is quite unpleasant for Black.)



14.0-0?! (14.♞f5 ♞xf5 15.♞xf5 exd4 16.♞xd4 ♞e5 would also have pleased me – but not 14.dxe5! ♞xe5 15.0-0 ♞c7 16.♞f5 ♞e5 17.♞g3 ♞g5 18.♞ce2) 14...e4 15.f3 when my plan was 15...b5 16.♞e2 ♞d5 if I hadn't found anything better than that.

It was also possible to simplify the position by means of 13.dxe5 ♞xe5 14.♞xe5 (or 14.♞e2!?) 14...♞xe5 15.0-0 ♞c7 16.♞fe1 ♞e5 17.f4 (A slight initiative might be felt for Black after 17.g3 ♞h5 18.h4 ♞g4 although White would not have any serious problems.) 17...♞e7.

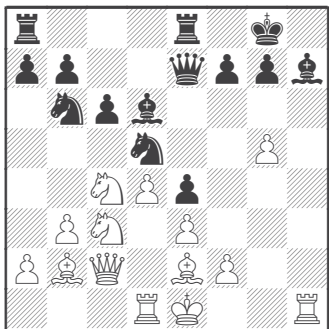
13...e4 14.♞d2 ♞b6 15.♞c4 ♞f5 Of course I could have preserved my bishop from exchange by 15...♞c7.



16.g4?! Now White decided to play very aggressively. After 16.♖xd6 ♜xd6 17.0-0 ♖fd5 18.♞c1 ♞g6 19.♔h2 ♞ad8 Black would have been able to gradually prepare an attack on the kingside.

16...♞h7 I didn't want to allow any further attacks on this bishop, so I rejected the retreat to g6 because of a possible ♖c4-e5 with gain of tempo.

17.h4 ♖fd5 18.g5 hxg5 19.hxg5



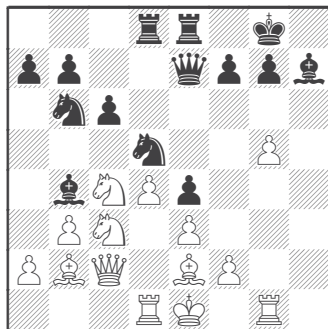
19...♞b4!? Possibly Murtas was counting on 19...♖xc3 20.♞xc3 ♖xc4 21.bxc4 ♞xg5 22.♔d2, or first 22.c5 and only then 23.♔d2, but I absolutely did not want to improve my opponent's pawn structure.

It would however have been very logical to go 19...♞g6!, preventing my rival from improving his pawn structure on the next move. The threat of 20.♞xh7 ♔xh7 21.♖xe4 is now eliminated and I am just threatening to pick off the pawn on g5.

20.♞g1? The rook abandons the h-file which means the total collapse of White's strategy. It was necessary to exploit some helpful tactics: 20.f4! ♞f5 (20...♖xc4 21.♞xc4! ♖xe3 22.♞h2) and then of course, not

21.♔f2? ♖xf4!, but 21.♞c1!? when the position is not at all clear.

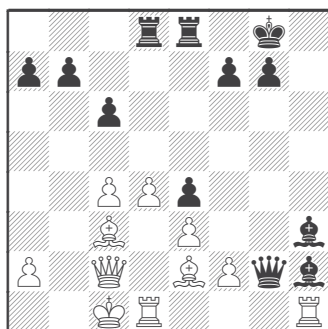
20...♞ad8



21.♔f1 In any case White should have opted for 21.a3 ♖xc3 22.♞xc3 ♞xa3 (22...♞xc3+ 23.♞xc3 ♞d5 24.♖e5) 23.♖xa3 ♞xa3 24.♞a1 (24.b4? ♖d5) 24...♞d6 25.♞xa7 ♞d7, although there is hardly anything good for White here.

21...♞f5! At the moment I played this move, I had already calculated all the way to the end and seen 28...♞g2, correctly assessing that it was completely in my favor.

22.♞g3 ♖xc4 23.bxc4 ♖xc3 24.♞xc3 ♞d6 25.♞g1 ♞h2 26.♞h1 ♞h3+ 27.♔e1 ♞xg5 28.♔d2 ♞g2 29.♔c1



29...♞d6! A precise move! White's position is already hopeless since he is unable to defend the pawn on f2 or create any threats along the h-file.

30.♔b1 ♞f6 31.f4 exf3 32.♞d3 f2 33.♞hf1 ♞xe3 34.♔b2 ♞f3 35.d5 ♞xf1 36.♞xf1 ♞xc3 37.♞xc3 ♞xd1

White resigned ■

MUST-WIN

by **GM Alex Ipatov**

LEVON
ARONIAN
AND WESLEY
SO UNDER
THE SCOPE
OF GUEST-
AUTHOR
ALEX IPATOV,
FORMER
WORLD
JUNIOR
CHAMPION



Photo by David Liada

IPATOV

Not too long ago, after winning the World Junior Championship in 2012 ahead of such prominent stars of today as Ding Liren and Richard Rapport, Ukraine-born GM Alex Ipatov seemed on course to reach the highest peaks of international chess. But then his natural intellectual curiosity led him to discover new horizons and pursue his dream of future entrepreneurship by attending the *John Cook School of Business* at Saint Louis University. Yet, although it might seem he has left the chess arena, the lure of the game still attracts him and it is our pleasure to have Alex annotate some of the best games from the World Cup, an event with which he is very familiar, having participated himself on two previous occasions, in 2013 and 2015.



Levon Aronian was in a must-win situation before this game. He had just lost the first 10+10 game and now had to score at all costs. I can only speculate how he felt before taking his seat at this all-or-nothing match. However, I can reflect a bit on my own experience at the World Cup. I was in a similar situation twice when I had to win at all costs.

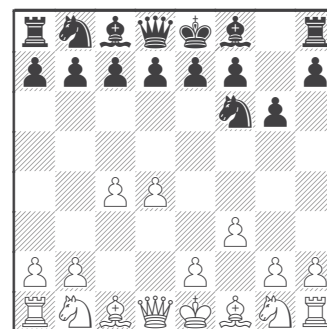
In 2013 against Wesley So, and in 2015 against Pavel Eljanov, I lost the first classical game with the black pieces and therefore was in a must-win situation with White the day after. In both games, I went straight for the attack without looking back, and quickly obtained winning positions. Against Wesley, I blundered on move 40 and we drew, whereas against Pavel I managed to lose a +5 position the exchange up and 20 minutes on the clock. That game still haunts me... Putting aside this unnecessary introduction, my point is this: when you are in a must-win situation, you either choose an all-or-nothing strategy where you look for complications, or you aim for a long game (i.e. Karjakin - Onischuk from Baku 2015). I definitely belong to the former category; I am simply not patient enough to steadily accumulate small advantages, whilst under pressure. Anyway let's now take a look at how Levon handled it!

E81

Levon Aronian	2799
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	2804

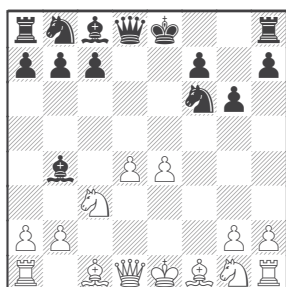
World Cup, Tbilisi 2017

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 Levon chooses a line that is notorious for its complications.

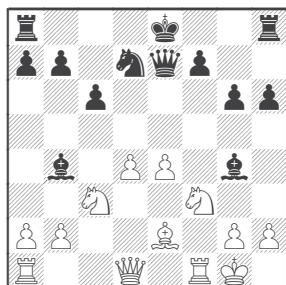


Levon Aronian, World Cup 2017.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

3...c5 3...d5 is another way to go. As for myself, I once played 3...e6 4.e4 d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♖c3 dxe4 7.fxe4 ♔b4



Though this is a very ugly move, the idea is simple: to exert pressure on the white center as soon as possible. The arising positions are very complicated and require a lot of memorization from Black. Nevertheless Maxime had won some games in this line too! 8.♔g5 (8.♔d3!? ♖xe4 9.♔e2 0-0 10.♔xe4 ♔e8 11.♖f3 ♔f5 12.♔g5 ♔xc3+ 13.bxc3 f6 14.♖d2 fxg5 15.0-0† A.Giri 2750 - M.Vachier-Lagrave 2766, Biel 2014) 8...h6 9.♔xf6 ♔xf6 10.♖f3 ♔g4 11.♔b5+ c6 12.♔e2 ♖d7 13.0-0 ♔e7



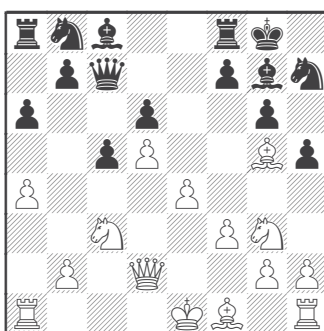
14.♔c2 (14.♔c1 0-0-0 15.♔f4 f5 16.♖b5∞ P.Svidler 2747 - M.Vachier-Lagrave 2722, Paris/St Petersburg 2013; 14.♖d2 ♔e6 15.a3 ♔a5 16.♖c4 ♔xc4 17.♔xc4 0-0-0 18.♔g4 h5 19.♔h3 ♔hf8 20.♔ad1 ♔b8 21.♔h1 ♔c7= G.Flear 2471 - M.Vachier-Lagrave 2745, Gibraltar 2014) 14...♔a5!? 15.♔ad1 ♔c7 16.♔h1 0-0-0= T.Sanikidze 2537 - A.Ipatov 2648, Drancy 2016.

4.d5 d6 5.♖c3 e6 6.e4 ♔g7 7.♖ge2 0-0 8.♖g3 a6 9.a4 h5 I guess that



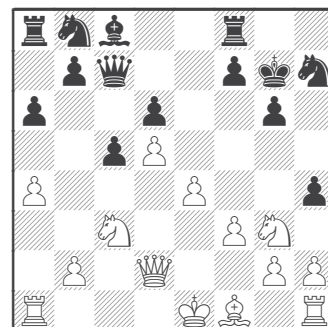
Levon was satisfied with the outcome of the opening at this point!

10.♔g5 ♔c7 11.♔d2 exd5 12.cxd5 ♖h7 12...♖bd7 13.♔e2 ♔b8 14.0-0 c4 15.♔ab1 (15.♔e3 h4 16.♖h1 h3 17.♖f2 hxg2 18.♔xg2 ♖h5 19.f4 ♖hf6 20.♔f3∞ V.Anand 2811 - H.Nakamura 2758, Moscow 2011) 15...♔e8 16.b4 cxb3 17.♔xb3 ♖c5 18.♔b4 ♔d7 19.♔fb1 ♔ec8∞ A.Giri 2758 - E.Bacrot 2729, Bilbao 2014.



13.♔h6 The most logical continuation in a must-win situation. The defender of the opponent's king must be exchanged! 13.♔h4 f6 14.♖ge2 (14.e5!? fxe5 15.♖ge4∞) 14...f5 15.exf5 ♔xf5 16.♖g3 ♖d7 17.♖xf5 gxf5 18.♔e2 ♔d4! 19.♔f2 ♔xf2+ 20.♔xf2 ♖e5 21.f4 ♖g4+ 22.♔xg4 fxg4= M.Matlakov 2685 - D.Yuffa 2467, Khanty-Mansiysk 2014.

13...h4 14.♔xg7 ♔xg7



15.♔c4!? What a novelty for a 10+10 game! White sacrifices his knight to open the h-file. 15.♖ge2 ♔e7 16.♖f4 ♖d7 17.♔e2 ♖e5 18.0-0 f5 19.♔ad1 ♖f6 20.♖e6+ ♔xe6 21.dxe6 ♔xe6 22.♔xd6 ♔xd6 23.♔xd6 fxe4 24.fxe4= was played in A.Dreev 2658 - O.Gladyshev 2455, France 2007.

15...hgx3 16.hgx3 ♔h8 Maxime decided not to weaken his king's position with ...f7-f6. We can only guess what Levon had prepared after 16...f6, maybe 17.e5!? (17.0-0 b5↔) 17...fxe5 18.♔e2!?∞ with the idea of connecting rooks while preventing ...b7-b5.

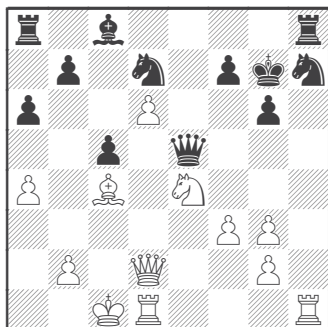
17.e5 ♔e7 18.0-0-0 ♖d7 Perhaps it would make sense for Black to generate a counterattack as quickly as possible by 18...b5 19.exd6 ♔d8 20.♔b3 ♖d7 21.g4∞,



although, in the end, White has two pawns for a piece and an ongoing attack.

19.exd6 19.e6 ♖df8 20.♗e4 b5∞.

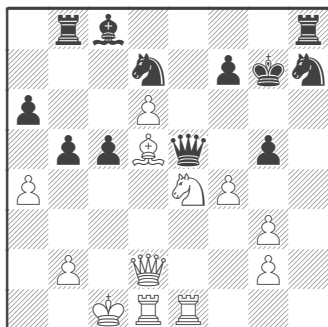
19...♙xd6 20.♗e4 ♙e5 21.d6



21...g5? Maxime decides to get rid of the ♗d2-h6 idea once and for all. However, he seriously weakens his king with this move.

22.♖he1! White switches the target!

22...b5 23.♗d5 ♖b8 24.f4



24...♙d4? The only move was 24...♙f5 which would be met by 25.♙c3+ ♗df6 26.d7 b4 27.dxc8 ♙ ♖bxc8 28.♙c4±.

25.♙e2 ♙b4 26.♙h5 Suddenly Black gets mated. So Maxime resigned, Levon equalized the score, went on to win this match, and then also the final!

Black resigned

Vladimir Fedoseev embarked on this game after having had a fantastic year. He had won Aeroflot, finished second in Dortmund, where he beat Kramnik with Black, and overall had improved his Elo rating from 2658 to 2731 in just six months!

C42

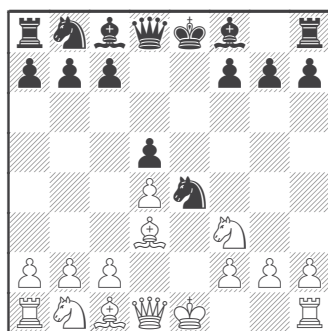
Wesley So 2810

Vladimir Fedoseev 2731

World Cup, Tbilisi (5.2) 2017

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗f6 Four years ago, I tried to neutralize Wesley's advantage of the white pieces with the same opening, but failed to achieve my objective.

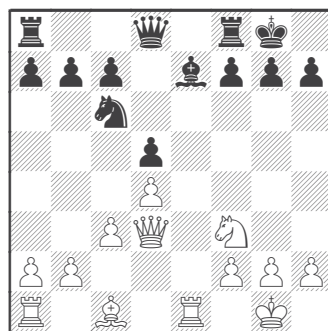
3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♗d3



6...♗e7 Together with Evgeny Miroshnichenko, we had prepared 6...♗d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.c4 c6 9.♗c3 ♗xc3 10.bxc3 dxc4 11.♗xc4 ♗g4 12.h3 ♗h5. However, here Wesley came up with a fresh idea, 13.g4!? ♗g6 followed by 14.♗e5∞, after which I failed to solve my opening problems and lost. W.So 2710 - A.Ipatov 2584, Tromso 2013. However, objectively speaking, Black should have still been able to equalize.

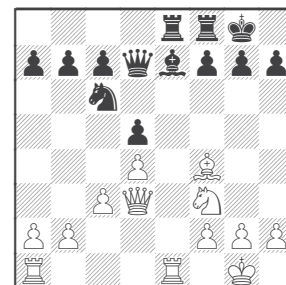
7.0-0 ♗c6 8.♗bd2 Wesley aims for slight pressure instead of entering a long theoretical discussion after 8.c4 ♗b4 9.♗e2 0-0.

8...♗f5 9.♖e1 ♗xd2 10.♙xd2 ♗xd3 11.♙xd3 0-0 12.c3



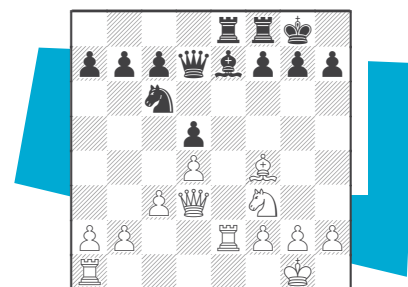
White enjoys a symbolic edge due to Black's misplaced knight on c6 and because he is slightly ahead in development, which helps him to gain temporary control over the e-file.

12...♙d7 13.♗f4 a6 Preventing any future ♙d3-b5. On the other hand, it gives White time to double rooks on the e-file. Earlier this year the same position had appeared in another top-level game, where Black tried to solve his problems instead by an immediate 13...♖ae8



A) 14.♙b5 ♗d6 15.♖xe8 ♖xe8 16.♗xd6 ♙xd6 17.♖e1 (17.♙xb7 ♖b8 18.♙a6 ♖xb2=) 17...♖xe1+ 18.♗e1 ♗d8 with the idea c7-c6 (18...b6 19.♗c2 g6 20.♗e3 ♗e7 21.♙a6 ♗c6 22.h4 ♗g7 23.g3± is unpleasant for Black) 19.♖e8+ ♙f8 20.♙d7 ♙d6 White's active queen has to be neutralized. 21.♙xd6 cxd6 22.♗c2 ♗c6 23.♗e3 ♗e7 and White has slight pressure, but Black should be able to hold.

B) 14.♖e2



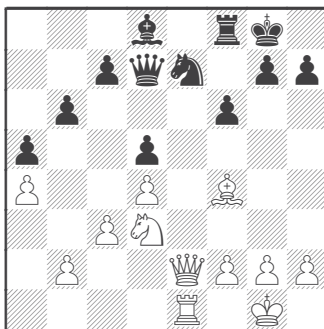
14...♗d6 (The suggested improvement for Black is 14...♗d8!? trying to solve the problem of the knight. 15.♗e5 ♙c8 16.♖ae1 ♗d6 and Black should be able to equalize.) 15.♗xd6 ♙xd6 16.♖ae1 ♖xe2 17.♙xe2 h6 18.g3 ♖b8 19.♗h4+ White had some initiative due to his control over the e-file, but Black went on to make a draw in F.Vallejo Pons 2709 - Li Chao 2720, Sharjah 2017.



Vladimir Fedoseev, World Cup 2017.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

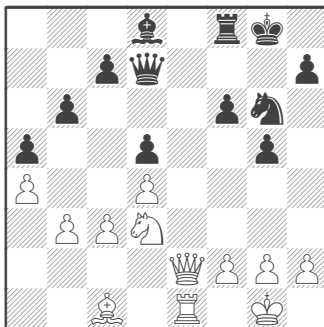
19. ♖e8+ ♜xe8 20. ♜xe8+ ♜f8 21. ♜e2
♜f7 22. ♜b3 b6 23. ♜c1 ♜e8= Z.Almasi
2640 - V.Ivanchuk 2717, Monte Carlo
2001) 19. ♜b5 ♜e5! 20. ♜xd7 and a
draw was agreed in D.Jakovenko 2710 -
V.Fedoseev 2733, Sochi 2017.

16... ♜xe2 17. ♜xe2 a5 18. ♜b3 b6
19. ♜c1 f6 20. a4 ♜e7 21. ♜d3



21...g5? Black unnecessarily weakens his kingside. Volodya is known for being ambitious, but though in general this is an admirable quality, in excess it is obviously bad. It is important to recognize and be aware of your own limitations! The simple 21... ♜f7 would have been sufficient. Black wants to move the knight away and then trade rooks on the e-file.

22. ♜c1 ♜g6 23. b3

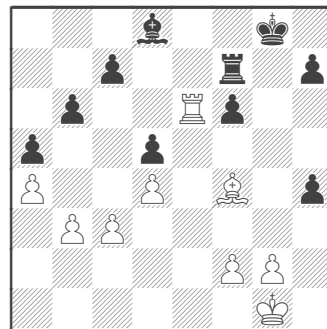


23...♜e7? Overconfidence. It was not too late to neutralize White's pressure on the e-file by 23... ♜f7, although even then White's position is preferable after 24. ♜f1 ♜e7 25. ♜d1 c6 26. f4†. Again,

21...g5 is the root cause of Black's problems.

24.h4! Three moves later, Wesley demonstrates why 21...g5 wasn't an acceptable way to play against a 2800 player.

24...gxf4 25. ♜f4 ♜f7 26. ♜e6 ♜xe6
27. ♜xe6 ♜xf4 28. ♜xf4 ♜d8

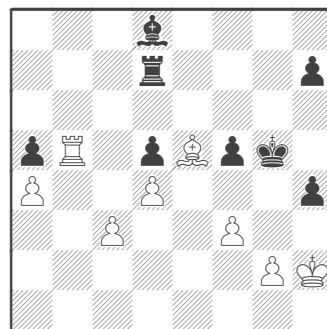


29.b4! The principle of the two weaknesses. Black's first weakness lies on the kingside. Since that weakness will not run away, White aims to create a second weakness on the queenside, while the black pieces still lack coordination.

29... ♜g7 29... axb4 30. cxb4 would allow White to create an outside passed pawn on the a-file.

30.bxa5 bxa5 31. ♜a6 c6 32. ♜xc6 The material balance has been restored and Black's position is in ruins – the d5, a5 and h4 pawns all need special care.

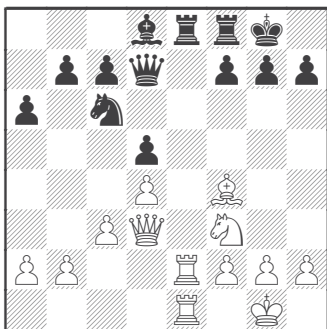
32... ♜g6 33. ♜c5 ♜d7 34. f3 ♜f5
35. ♜d2 ♜e6 36. ♜c6+ ♜f5 37. ♜e1
♜g5 38. ♜c5 f5 39. ♜h2 ♜h5 40. ♜f2
♜d6 41. ♜e3 ♜b6 42. ♜b5 ♜d8
43. ♜f4 ♜d7 44. ♜e5 ♜g5



45. ♜c5 f4 46. ♜c6 ♜f5 47. ♜a6 ♜g5

14. ♜e2 14. ♜e5 ♜xe5 15. ♜xe5 f6
16. ♜g3 ♜fe8 17. ♜e2 ♜f8 18. ♜ae1 ½-½
V.Anand 2786 - B.Gelfand 2696, Monte
Carlo 2005.

14... ♜ae8 15. ♜ae1 ♜d8

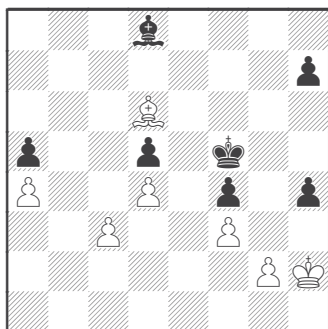


Two weeks later, Fedoseev had this position against Jakovenko and drew comfortably.

16. ♜d2 Dmitry opted for 16. h3
♜xe2 17. ♜xe2 f6 18. ♜d2 a5 (18... ♜f7

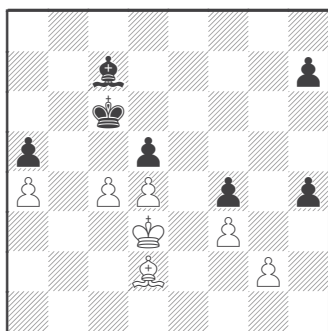


48.♔h3 ♕f5 49.♖c6 ♔g5 50.♗e6
♙e7 51.♖c6 ♙d8 52.♙d6 ♕f5
53.♔h2 ♖g7 54.♙e5 ♗d7 55.♖d6
♗xd6 56.♙xd6



Houdini, on depth 49, claims that it is 6.40 for White – in other words, completely winning! White's plan is simple: bring the king to d3, push c3-c4 and create a passed pawn. Black has to remain passive since three of his pawns are on dark squares and, therefore they are potential targets for White's dark-squared bishop.

56...♔g5 57.♔g1 ♕f5 58.♔f2 ♔g5
59.♔f1 ♕f5 60.♙a3 ♕e6 61.♔e2
♕f5 62.♙c1 ♔g5 63.♔f1 ♙c7
64.♙d2 ♙d8 65.♙e1 ♕f5 66.♔e2
♕e6 67.♔d3 ♔d7 68.c4 ♕c6 69.♙c3
♙b6 70.♙b2 ♙d8 71.♙c1 ♙c7
72.♙d2



The a5, f4 and h4 pawns are all on dark squares. White will combine threats against these weaknesses and force Black into zugzwang.

72...h5 73.♙c3 ♙b6 74.♙b2 ♙c7
75.♙a3 ♙d8 76.♙f8 ♙g5 77.♙g7
♕d6 78.♙e5+ ♕c6 79.♕c3○ ♙h6
80.♙f6 ♙f8 81.♔d3 h3 82.gxh3 ♙d6
83.♙e5

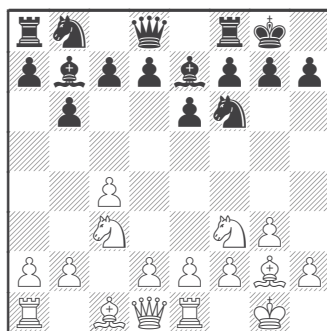
Black resigned

E17

Wesley So	2810
Baadur Jobava	2687

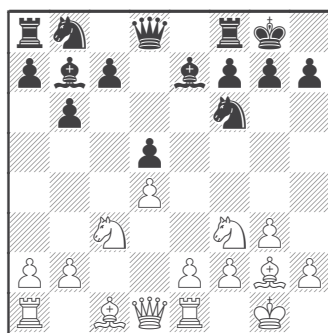
World Cup, Tbilisi (4-3), 2017

1.♖f3 ♖f6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 ♙b7
4.♙g2 e6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♕c3 0-0
7.♖e1 7.d4 allows 7...♕e4 which is
another branch of theory.



7...d5 This prevents e2-e4, but
closes the h1-a8 diagonal for the
bishop. 7...♕e4 doesn't make as
much sense as it does after 7.d4,
because this time Black fails to
establish control over the e4-square.
8.♕xe4 ♙xe4 9.d3 ♙b7 10.e4 c5
11.d4 cxd4 12.♕xd4 d6 13.b3 a6
14.♙a3 ♖c7 (14...♕d7? 15.e5!
♙xg2 16.exd6 ♙f6 17.♕xg2 ♕c5
18.b4 ♕b7 19.c5+- V.Kramnik
2772 - R.Ponomarev 2739,
Moscow 2009) 15.♙b4 ♕d7 16.a4
♖ac8 17.a5 ♖fe8 18.♙a2 g6 19.axb6
♖xb6 20.♙a5± A.Baryshpolets
2584 - H.Hernandez Carmenates
2501, Kenner 2016.

8.cxd5 exd5 9.d4



A typical pawn structure. Black would like
to gain some space in the center by pushing



Wesley So, World Cup 2017. ▲
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

...c7-c5. However, he will then have to
reckon with the potential weaknesses on
d5 and/or c5. In my opinion, this is what
the present type of position is about – if
Black can play ...c7-c5 and maintain his
center, he will be fine. On the other hand,
if Black doesn't play ...c7-c5, White has
a free hand to grab some space on the
queenside or in the center.

9...♖e8 Tomashevsky tried an immediate
9...c5 in three games at the same rapid
tournament and did well in terms of the
outcome of the opening. 10.b3 (10.♙f4
♕bd7 11.dxc5 ♕xc5 12.♖c1 ♕fe4 13.♕d4
♕xc3 14.♖xc3 ♙f6 15.♖c2 ♖d7 16.b4

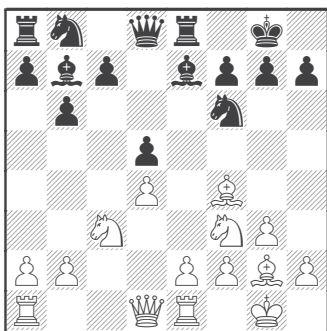


♙xd4 17.♚xd4 ♖e6= D.Navara 2734 - E.Tomashevsky 2728, Huaian 2016)

A) 10...♖c6 11.♙b2 ♜e8 12.♞c1 (Perhaps 12.dxc5!? bxc5 13.♞c1 with the idea of playing against the hanging pawns on d5 and c5.) 12...♖e4 13.e3 cxd4 14.♖xd4 ♖xd4 15.♖xe4 dxe4 16.♚xd4 ♚xd4 17.♙xd4 ♞ac8 18.♙h3 ♞xc1 19.♞xc1 ♙d6= P.Harikrishna 2753 - E.Tomashevsky 2728, Huaian 2016.

B) 10...♖a6 11.♙b2 ♖c7 12.♞c1 ♖e6 13.e3 ♜e8 14.♞e2 ♙f8 15.♞d2 ♚e7= Ding Liren 2766 - E.Tomashevsky 2728, Huaian 2016.

10.♙f4



10...h6 Jobava continues his partisan strategy, although this is perhaps not the wisest way to play against the second highest rated player in the world. Wesley takes his chance and seizes the initiative.

11.♖e5 ♖bd7 12.♚a4! ♖f8 13.♖c6 ♚d7 14.♖xe7+ ♞xe7 15.♚xd7 ♞xd7 16.♙h3± White is marginally better and can press on without risk. An ideal type of position in a World Cup situation!

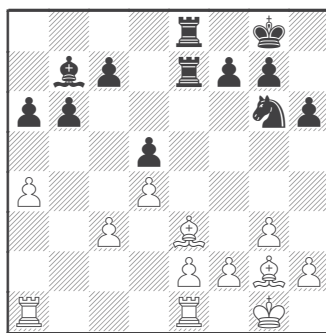
16...♞e7 17.♖b5 17.f3!? deserved serious attention, taking the e4-square away from the black knight and meeting 17...♖e6 with 18.♙xe6! fxe6 19.♖b5±.

17...♖g6 18.♙e3 ♖e4 19.a4 a6



▲ Baadur Jobava, World Cup 2017. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

20.♖c3 ♖xc3 21.bxc3 ♞ae8 22.♙g2

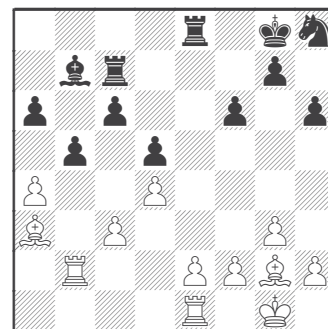


White's pressure is getting nasty. White has several ways to undermine Black's pawn structure on the queenside: c3-c4 or a4-a5,

the former being the most unpleasant.

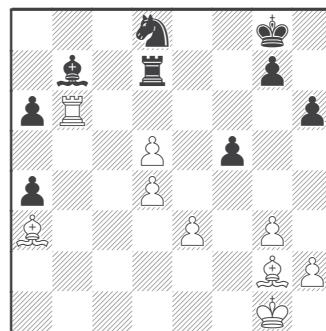
22...c6 This prevents c3-c4, but undermines the b6-pawn and the complex of dark squares.

23.♞a2 f6 24.♙c1 ♖h8 25.♙a3 ♞c7 26.♞b2 b5 Looks ugly, but what to do?



27.e4! As we all know, bishops like open lines! And this is exactly what Wesley is trying to do – open up the position for his bishops.

27...♖f7 28.♞e3 bxa4 29.exd5 ♞xe3 30.fxe3 cxd5 31.c4! ♞d7 32.♙h3 ♞c7 33.♙g2 ♞d7 34.♞b6 ♖d8 35.cxd5 f5 35...♙xd5? 36.♙h3 ♞c7 37.♞b8 wins.



36.g4! Giving Black no time to consolidate. Once Wesley got the better position out of the opening, he never let his opponent off the hook.

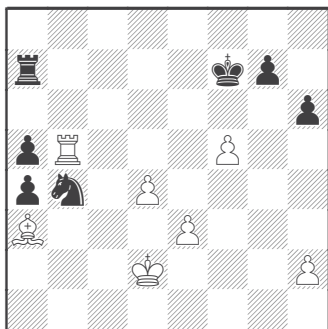
36...♙xd5 37.gxf5 ♙c4 38.♙f1 This move is the result of a human desire to simplify and thereby eliminate the slightest risk. But White could have preserved the bishop pair and continued to play for an attack and domination by 38.♞b8!? ♖h7 (38...♖f7? 39.♙c6!!+-) 39.♙e4 ♖f7 40.f6+ g6 41.♞e8, when at

R1	Ruiz Castillo	So	½:1½
R2	So	Bluebaum	4:2
R3	Vallejo Pons	So	½:1½
R4	So	Jobava	2½:1½
Quarter-final	Fedoseev	So	½:1½
Semifinal	So	Ding Liren	2½:3½



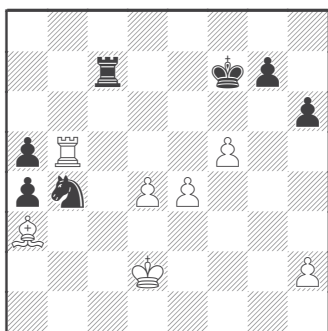
some point the white pawns will start moving forward and it will all be over.

38...♙xf1 39.♙xf1 a5 40.♖b5
♜c6 41.♙f2 ♖a7 42.♙e2 ♙f7
43.♙d2 ♜b4



44.e4 44.♙xb4?? Never take pawns like that! After 44...axb4 45.♖xb4 a3 46.♖b1 a2 47.♖a1 ♙f6 48.e4 ♖a3, despite being a pawn down, it is now Black who is better. Remember that activity can be worth a pawn or two, even in endgames!

44...♖c7

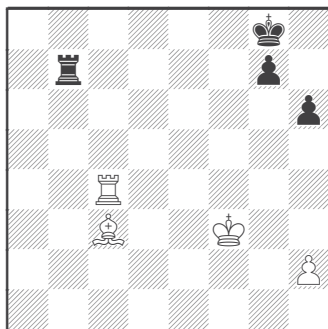


45.♖xa5?! Allowing Black to activate his rook and transpose into an endgame with practical chances to hold on. Best was 45.♖c5!, eliminating all sorts of activity by the black pieces. 45...♖xc5 (If 45...♖a7 then 46.d5+- with the centralization of the king to follow) 46.dxc5 ♜c6 47.♙d3 and the white king penetrates.

45...♖c2+ 46.♙d1 ♖c4 47.♖a7+ ♙g8 48.♖xa4 ♖xd4+ 49.♙e2 ♖xe4+ 50.♙f3 ♖e5 51.♖xb4 ♖xf5+ 52.♖f4 Personally, I would be stressed how to win this position in a World Cup situation. I would know that the position should be winning and that would create even more psychological

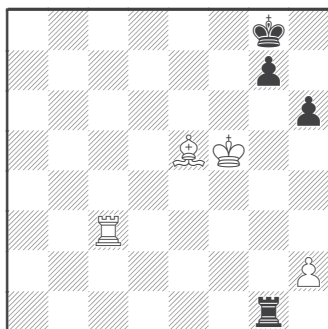
pressure, similar to what happened in my must-win games against Wesley himself.

52...♖a5 53.♙b4 ♖b5 54.♙c3 ♖b7
55.♖c4



White's plan is to put the bishop on e5 from where it will do two things – protect the h2-pawn and prepare ♖c7. The good thing for White is that the h8 square is of the same color as the bishop, which means that Black must refrain from trading rooks and so will have to make concessions.

55...♖f7+ 56.♙e4 ♙h7 57.♙e5
♖f1 58.♖c7 ♖g1 59.♙f5 ♖g5+
60.♙e6 ♙g8 61.♖c3 ♖g6+ 62.♙f5
♖g5+ 63.♙f4 ♖g1 64.♙f5



64...♖f1+?? A one-move blunder. Pressure... why not repeat moves with 64...♖g5+ and let White figure out how to break through? After 65.♙f4 ♖g1 66.♖g3 ♖f1+ 67.♙e4 ♖f7 Wesley would still have to display fine technique. Who knows how this game and the match would then have ended? After all, it was a rapid game and the psychological pressure was huge!

65.♙g6 ♖g1+ 66.♙g3

Black resigned

THE PIRC DEFENCE – GRANDMASTER REPERTOIRE

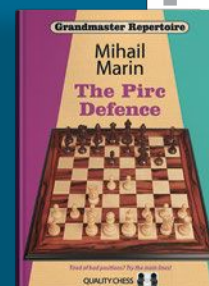
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The Pirc is more of a counterattack than a defense: Black allows his opponent to occupy the center and provokes a confrontation, trusting in the power of the g7-bishop and the dynamic potential in his position. It is the perfect weapon for players who seek a complex strategic fight with the black pieces.

PLAYING 1.d4 d5 – A CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE

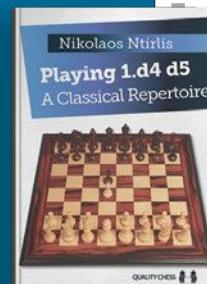
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Nikolaos Ntirlis provides a top-class repertoire for Black after 1.d4 d5 with the Queen's Gambit Declined. This is truly the Rolls Royce of chess openings, having been played by World Champions for more than a century. The book also offers a complete repertoire against the Catalan, London System, Torre and all other significant alternatives.

Quality Chess





WIM AGATA BYKOVTSOVA

is not only one of America's top female chess masters but also one of the few to be embraced by MIT's rigorous admission process every year, where the acceptance rate is less than 8%.

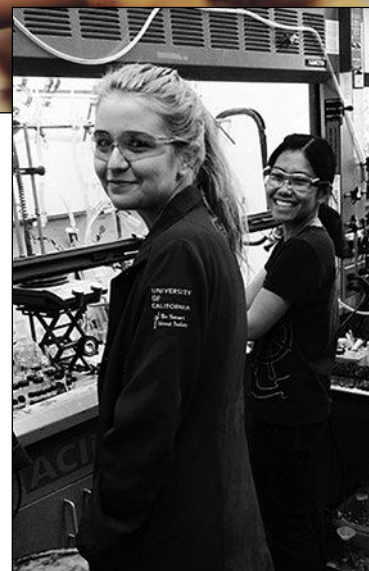
Photo by Andreas Kontokanis

by **WIM Yuanling Yuan**

She's MIT'S HIDDEN GEM

It's

not every day that a high school dropout makes her way to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It's also not every day that a bright-eyed girl frequently finds herself winning chess competitions in a room full of fuming boys. It's unusual. Though only a freshman, Agata wasted no time in diving headfirst into her academic curiosities. She chose to major in "Chemical-Biological Engineering", which she explained to me as, "Chemical engineering with added elements of biology. It's simple. You know what chemical engineering is, right?" I half cracked a smile and nodded convincingly. But secretly, I hadn't got a clue. All I knew was that she belonged at a place like MIT.



Catch a Rising Star

with Yuanling Yuan

Agata began her journey to MIT 9 years ago when she stumbled upon a chess program at her elementary school when she was in fourth grade. She loved the challenge and the problem-solving nature of the game. “It’s a big puzzle and you’ve just got to put the pieces together,” she told me enthusiastically, “My first goal was to beat my brother!”

Her mother quickly realized Agata’s affinity for the game and the endless potential within her daughter. She became Agata’s biggest supporter, driving two hours each way to Los Angeles from their home in Santa Barbara just so Agata could train with IM Andranik Matikozian, who became her lifelong chess coach. Agata added, “There were no coaches in the Santa Barbara area. My mom made some big sacrifices for me. She drove back and forth for five years.”

The dedication of the entire family paid off. The young girl quickly rose through the ranks and made her first milestone by winning the gold medal at the 2014 Pan-American Chess Championship, only six years after she first met the black-and-white board. A year later, she became a Women’s International Master by taking gold once more at the 2015 North American Junior U20 Chess Championship. The same year, she rose to the international stage as she was presented the bronze medal she deserved at the closing ceremony of the World Youth Chess Championship. In 2016, she was invited to the most prestigious national event of the year, the 12-person US Women’s Chess Championship.

Asked about her playing style, Agata would laugh and characterize herself as an aggressive, active player. She joked, “My coach tried converting me into a positional player and it hasn’t worked. I can attack but positional play just doesn’t work with me. I really tried!”

Perhaps Agata’s chess style is a reflection of her attitude towards life, always taking the bull by the horns. A self-motivated individual, she preferred to be home schooled during 6th and 7th grade, learning advanced high school math and science concepts on her own. She poured over textbooks and watched online videos at her own pace, which was far faster than the average middle-schooler. In 8th grade, Agata went back to school, but not to her typical middle school – she went to community college.

A year later, she decided to give her local high school a chance and enrolled as a freshman, albeit taking all the toughest courses. As with others trying to convert her into a positional chess player, the traditional school system just wasn’t for Agata Bykovtseva. No matter how much she tried, she knew that she was the fierce Sicilian and King’s Indian attacker over the board. That was who she was and what she represented – someone who takes a proactive rather than reactive approach to life.

The following year, the young scholar returned to her place – Santa Barbara City College (SBCC). Her high school simply ran out of classes for her to take. She didn’t mind being the youngest amongst her classmates at SBCC. “My friends were the 20- to 25-year-olds,” she mentioned casually. Her maturity was much higher than most girls her age anyway.

Because of Agata’s lifelong interest in the math and sciences, of which chess was an extension of its application, applying to MIT was a no-brainer. It seemed like the perfect fit. In her college application essays, she wrote about her childhood experiences playing chess and the life lessons drawn from the ancient game. Agata explained to me, “Chess shaped my personality and who I am – a competitive person. It motivated me to work hard while learning how to lose and put things in perspective. It also gave me the opportunity to travel and see the world.”

She applied early and unsurprisingly, was not only awarded admission but also a full scholarship. There is no doubt that chess had helped her get there.



WIM Yuanling Yuan has been the top female chess player in Canada since 2008. She has represented Canada at the Women’s World Championship and has led the Canadian women’s team on top boards at four Olympiads to date. In 2016, Yuanling graduated from Yale University with a B.A. in Economics. In addition to chess, Yuanling is passionate about entrepreneurship and empowering girls around the world.

At MIT, Agata is currently taking an assortment of classes, which includes “Introduction to Biology” as well as “Latin America and the Global 60s”, spending time at a research lab and meeting people from all walks of life. “It’s really about the people at MIT – everyone is so enthusiastic and there is an incredibly supportive community,” she beamed, “There’s also a nerd culture here that I love. But people do all kinds of things. Everyone has their own passion.”

For now, Agata Bykovtseva is just focusing on delving deeper into her academic passions. She may go to grad school and do research or apply to medical school and become a surgeon. As for chess, she plans to continue playing just for fun. "But I will always love the game," she told me with a big smile.

The sky is the limit for the well-rounded chess champion. Her next journey just began. Whether she'll open with 1.e4 or 1.c4, she's got it under control.

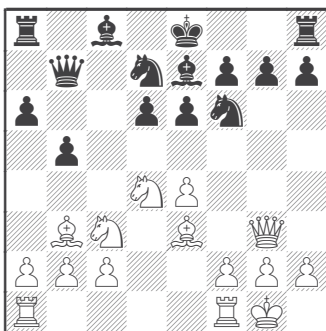
Yuanling Yuan annotates Agata Bykovtseva's games



Here is a game that Agata believes is most representative of her style. It's the last round at the 2016 US Girls' Championship U20 and Agata is leading the rankings...

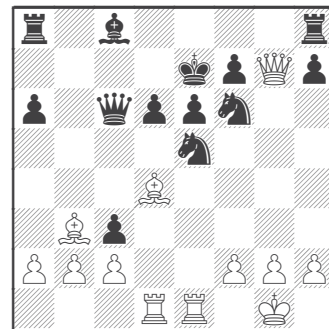
Agata Bykovtseva	2158
Jennifer Yu	2187

US Girls' U-20 Championship, 2016

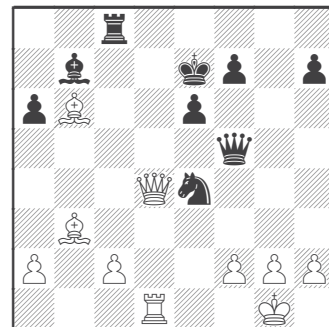


White has tremendous play despite being down a knight.

16...♞c6? 16...♞g6 would have been slightly better, blocking the g7 pawn. But then 17.♙xf6+ ♞xf6 (17...♜xf6? 18.♞xd6+ ♜e8 19.♞d8 mate) 18.♞xd6+ ♜d8 (18...♜e8 19.♙xe6 fxe6 20.♞xe6+ wins) 19.♙a4 ♞e7 20.♞b6+ ♜e8 21.♞c6 ♞b8 22.♞c7 ♞a8 23.♙c6 winning.
17.♞xg7 Threatening ♞xe6.
17...♜e5



18.♞xe5! The dark square bishop is worth so much more than the rook!
18...dxe5 19.♙xe5 ♜e4 20.♞xh8 Black is completely lost.
20...♙b7 21.♞g7 cxb2 22.♙xb2 ♞c5 23.♙d4 ♞f5 24.♙b6 ♞c8 25.♞d4



Threatening 26.♙d8+ ♜ moves ♞h8 mate.



Agata among winners of the World Youth Championship, Porto Carras 2015.
 Photo by Andreas Kontokanis

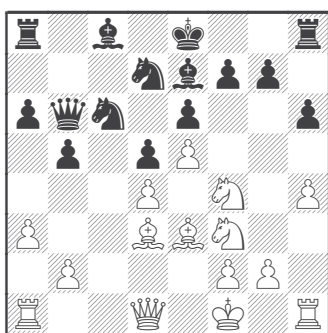


25...♔d5 26.c4 ♖xf2 27.♗xf2 ♕xc4
28.♗h4+ ♗f6 29.♗xf6+ ♔xf6
30.♝c1 ♝b8 31.♕c7 ♝c8 32.♝xc4
Black resigned

Agata shows off her aggressive, active style in this game against fellow top US junior.

Agata Bykovtseva	2026
Simone Liao	2075

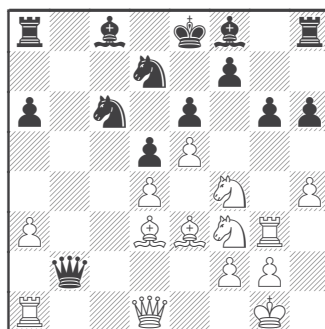
US Girls' Junior Championship, 2015



16.♝h3 Agata has got a great setup coming out of the French and begins to mobilize her pieces on the kingside. No piece will be left behind, including the rook. Let the attack begin!

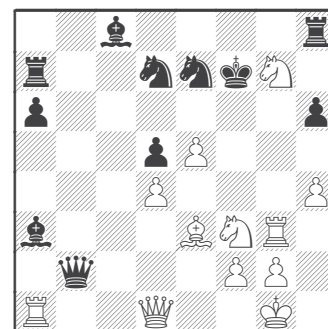
16...b4 17.♔g1 bxa3 18.bxa3 ♗b2? Better is 18...♕f8 19.♝g3 ♝b8 20.♖h5 g6 21.♖f4 ♝g8.

19.♝g3 ♕f8 20.♖h5 g6 21.♖f4 Agata prepares for the big sacrifice.



21...♕xa3? Black underestimates White's deadly attack on the kingside. Better is 21...♖e7 which would be met

by 22.♕d2 ♗b7 23.♝b1 ♗c6 24.♕a5. 22...♕g6! She goes for it! 22...fxg6 23.♖xe6! If 23.♖xg6 then 23...♝g8 24.♕xh6 ♝b8. 23...♝a7 24.♝xg6 ♖e7 25.♖g7+ ♔f7 26.♝g3

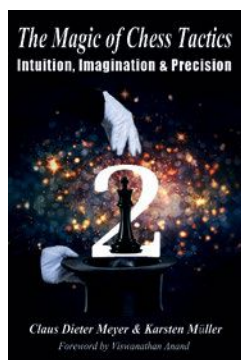


Black's position is hopeless. There are too many threats.

26...♔f8 27.♖e1 ♔g8 28.♖e6+ ♔f7 29.♝g7+ ♔xe6 30.♗g4+
Black resigned

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Texas Tech Knight Raiders

DETERMINED
TO SUCCEEDInterview with GM Alex Onischuk *By* **Chris Wainscott**

Imagine what George Siefert must have felt in 1989 as he walked on to the field for the first time as head coach of the NFL's San Francisco 49ers. His predecessor Bill Walsh had inherited a team that hadn't tasted success in a long time and led them to three championships during his tenure, including one in his final season. This put Siefert in the unenviable position of having to replace a legend.

Fast forward 24 years later and GM Alex Onischuk found himself in exactly this same position, though in a different sport. Alex had just been named the new head coach of the Texas Tech Knight Raiders, replacing Susan Polgar who left after back to back wins of the Presidents Cup, the Final Four of college chess.

How has he measured up? So far so good as GM Onischuk has led his teams to appearances in the Presidents Cup the last four consecutive years, as well as winning the Pan American Collegiate Championships (the event which determines the participants in the Final Four) in 2015. While he may not yet have managed to win the Presidents Cup itself he has accomplished much in his time, and with modest resources relatively speaking.

Unlike many programs who are able to pack their rosters with grandmaster after grandmaster, Texas Tech has managed their success while having mostly players with much more modest ratings. This serves as a testament to their determination to succeed and their ability to function as a team.

I spoke with Alex about the TTU program, their successes to date, goals for the future, and his outlook on life as a chess coach for a successful program.

» I know that a lot of people may be familiar with how you came to be the coach of Texas Tech, but is there anything in particular you would like to say about the experience?

When Susan left, the Texas Tech administration decided to keep the program, so they were looking for a director, and they wound up hiring Al Lawrence. There were a couple of candidates for the coaching position, but they didn't quite work out. Al suggested me and I was invited for an interview.

Susan had invited me to play in the SPICE Cup twice, so I was familiar with the town a little bit. When I came for the interview I felt like it was the right time for me. I was about 35 and I was thinking of, if not retiring, at least getting a job. So it was perfect timing. When they made me an offer I was happy to accept.



» I'm familiar with the Lubbock area as I grew up not too far from there. How do you find that living in a place like Lubbock compares to some of the larger cities that you've lived in?

I was ready. I'm from a bigger city in Ukraine, but I did live in some small towns as well. Later I lived in Moscow and Kiev, so I was in really big cities. Quite frankly I like small towns and I enjoy being here. It's a very nice town to raise a family in.

» Let's talk about your team a little bit. How do you define a successful year?

We have two priorities at Texas Tech. One is competition, and the other is outreach. We compete for the

university by playing in the various collegiate events, but we also organize a lot of tournaments in the area for local players. To be successful we need to do both well.

We organize several tournaments each year which draw 150-180 kids from the surrounding areas. We also hold camps as well. The outreach is very important to us.

As far as the competition goes, we look to qualify for the Final Four, and we have tournaments such as the Southwest Collegiate Championship, which we won. If you look at many of the events we've played in, we were underdogs. For example, [at the Southwest Collegiate] we had one GM on our roster and some of those other schools are full of grandmasters. So of course this is a success for us.

» In addition to team goals, I'm sure that you work on individual goals with your students. Can you give me an example of some goals that you might set with them?

I just ask my students to play their best chess; to try their best. If someone loses because they got outplayed at the board that's OK with me as long as they prepared and played their best. OK, if someone loses because they partied all night or didn't prepare at all I wouldn't accept that. So I just ask my team to be professional and try their best.

We prepare together for competitions, and I also work each week with every player on the team. Of course when they have finals or other obligations then they'll ask to reschedule.

It's not possible to get better

STUDENTS SAY

I also had a chance to hear from a couple of the students in the program, Carla Heredia and Leo Creger.

Why did you choose Texas Tech over other schools?

● I chose Texas Tech because of its competitive chess program and the unique opportunity to train with Alex Onischuk, who is one of the best players in the World. Alex has not only been part of the US Olympic team and US Champion, but he also has been a second of Karpov and many other strong players. In addition, Texas Tech has an interesting masters program in sports management so the chess program and the masters make a good combination to choose Texas Tech.

● I chose to attend Texas Tech mainly because I learned that there

was a strong chess program at the university!

How do you balance your academic schedule and your chess schedule?

● It's difficult to keep up with the academic schedule, chess, and work. However, the key is to be motivated for all of them. Besides my intrinsic motivation, GM Onischuk and my professors are very encouraging and help me out to keep me engaged with both chess and classes.

● I spend most of my time each day in the chess office between each class and also after I'm done for the day until it closes at 5:00. I usually

do my schoolwork and studying for exams in the evening. Sometimes it's difficult to walk away from the office to go to class when everyone is having a fun time playing blitz and bughouse!

Anything you would like to say about your teammates?

● One of the best things about our university and chess program is its

Carla Heredia ▼





overnight. I do think that the reason we do quite a bit better than our ratings indicate is that we work together throughout the year. The goal is to get to good form before the important competitions.

Take the Southwest Collegiate Championship – we were the third team by rating, but when we played UTD we gave them only one draw in nine games. That's pretty impressive to score 8½. My team is very dedicated to working hard and doing their best.

» How do you recruit players?

The first thing that we look at is how they will do academically. So first I try

to pick excellent students. My A team has a GPA that's around 3.9. We have a women's team with a GPA of 3.5. This is also how we define success.

After academics I'm looking for serious professional players. By professional I mean that when they go to tournaments they are dedicated to doing their best.

» You said that you have weekly sessions with your team. How much on average do your players work?

Well, I hope I don't reveal a secret, but I work approximately three hours each week with each of the players on the A team one on one. Of course I also encourage them to get together

and work, play some blitz, work on openings, or whatever they can do.

I also work some with our B team, which is our women's team. Also I work a little bit with the other members of the team. We have about 20 people, which range in ability from our one grandmaster, all the way to beginners.

Keep in mind that these are professional students. Some of them are PhD students, so if they have even five hours a week for chess then I'm happy.

Of course I don't have as much time as I used to have since after Al Lawrence left I took on the role of Director as well as coach, so what I did is I focus on the A and B teams, but then we have student assistants who will work to help some of the lower rated players. I'm impressed by how hard some of our lower rated players are working to improve.

» As I said earlier, I know the area pretty well, so I'm wondering if when members of your team are looking for tournaments to play in are there usually anything in the area, or are you normally having to travel?

We pretty much always have to travel, which is one of the challenges of being a chess player in Lubbock. Even for weekend tournaments we normally have a travel to Dallas, which is about a five hour drive.

The University does give us some money which I can use to send students to tournaments which helps a lot. You can train as much as you want, but without playing it's hard to improve your chess.

» Thanks Alex.

No problem, thank you!



Leo Creger ▲

can have fun with chess while still taking it seriously.

If you could change anything about the program what would it be?

● I would like to see a big open tournament in Lubbock. We have very strong players in the program and I am pretty sure that people from other cities would like to come here and play in a tournament.

● If I could change something about the program, it would be to have tournaments amongst our team. For example, a Friday night three round G/30 tournament would give everyone a chance to play rated games and learn from them. Maybe it could happen this year!

With a coach like Alex and students like Carla and Leo I think that the future is looking pretty bright in Lubbock!

diversity. We have players from all over the world and through them I have learned about their countries and culture.

● My teammates are a great group of people; otherwise I wouldn't be around the office all the time! I always enjoy talking with them and playing chess whether they're a weaker or stronger player than me. What I like most is that everyone helps create an enjoyable atmosphere on a regular basis and



LONDON SYSTEM

By **FM Dennis Monokroussos**

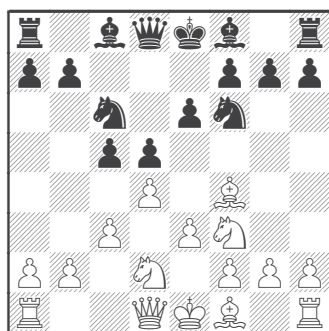
For many years the London System was a backwater of opening theory. It was a safe, reliable, and easy-to-play system suitable for club players who didn't want to bother working on opening theory, but nothing that a professional player would bother with. This has changed in a big way.

INTRO

Grandmasters like Eric Prie, Gata Kamsky, and Baadur Jobava made major contributions to this opening, and now it features in the games of the world's absolute elite on a regular basis – and not only in blitz and rapid. What was once an opening that could be dispensed with after 5-10 minutes with the *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings* is now a real opening with entire books dedicated to its theory. In this article, I will cover what seems to me the main complex of London theory, at least in top-class chess. My presentation will be systematic and historical, looking at the development of this variation from one subsystem to the next.

Our coverage begins after the following moves:

1.d4 d5 2.♘f4 ♘f6 3.e3 e6 4.♗f3 c5 5.c3 ♗c6 6.♗bd2



This position can arise after a number of different move orders, and of course both sides can vary along the way. But the first point to highlight is White's last move. 6.♗d3 used to be more common or at least considered interchangeable with the text, but now players realize that the bishop may also go to b5, fighting for the e5 square. That's why 6.♗bd2 is almost automatic now, even if transpositions are possible.

6...♗d6 The most obvious move, offering a trade of bishops and fighting for the e5 square.

Aronian's 6...♗e7

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The hot 6...cxd4 7.exd4 ♗h5

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7.♗g3 White does not object to the exchange, but wants it to happen on his terms. 7.♗e5 is sometimes played, but at the moment White can't sustain his presence on e5. 7...♞c7

A) 8.♗b5 0-0 9.♗xc6 (9.♗df3 cxd4 10.exd4 ♗e4) Black will play ...f6 whenever he's ready, and White's central construction will disintegrate. This position hasn't arisen in GM play, but Black's 6-0 score is at least somewhat representative of who stands better.) 9...bxc6 10.0-0 ♖b8 11.♖b1 cxd4 12.cxd4 c5

B) 8.♗df3 0-0 9.♗d3 b6 10.♗xc6 ♞xc6 11.♗e5 ♞c7 was equal in a game S.Judas 2076 - M.Wind 1640, back in 2000, and in



a very high-level game between Anish Giri 2798 and Hou Yifan 2673, Wijk aan Zee 2016, Black held the position.

7...0-0 Black is willing to take on g3, but only after White has castled.

8.♖d3 The bishop used to move to this square automatically, but things have changed, as we'll see later.

Carlsen and 8.♖b5

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8...♖e7 This was the normal move, preparing ...e5, but a brilliant discovery by GM Prie not only changed Black's preference here, but also helped to put the London on the map. **8...♖c7?! looks logical**, fighting for e5, but has a simple tactical problem. **9.dxc5** exploits an unusual pin. Black has some compensation for the pawn, but there's no good reason for him to sac the pawn in the first place.

Sergey Karjakin 2769 Michael Adams 2744

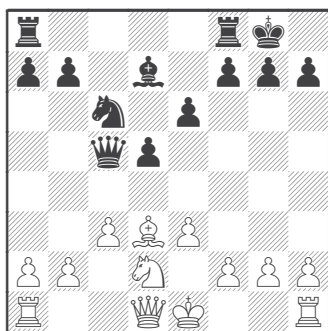
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9.♖e5 Both desirable and necessary. **9.0-0?! ♖xg3 10.hxg3 e5** is simply bad: **11...♖xh7 12.♖h5+ ♖g8**

13.♖g6 ♖e8 /-+ leaves White without anything approaching a serious attack. Unsurprisingly, Black has won eight games from this point, drawn four, and lost none.

10...♖xd7?! 10...♖xd7 looks weird, but it's Black's best. White may have a very small edge after **11.dxc5 ♖xc5 12.♖f3**, but it's nothing that should frighten Black away from this variation. Perhaps Black's best is **12...f6N**, with equality.

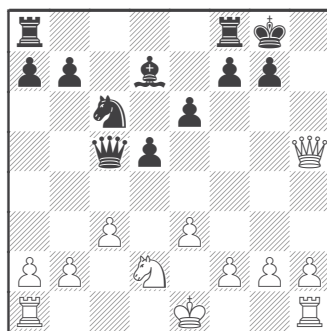
11.♖xd6 ♖xd6 12.dxc5 ♖xc5



13.♖xh7+!! This brilliant discovery

of Prie's put an end to **10...♖xd7** – or at least it did once the word got out. Actually, while Prie played this in 2009 and was the first person to use it in over-the-board chess, it seems that one Klaus Koegler deserves the ultimate credit for this, as he uncorked it in a correspondence game back in 2007.

13...♖xh7 14.♖h5+ ♖g8



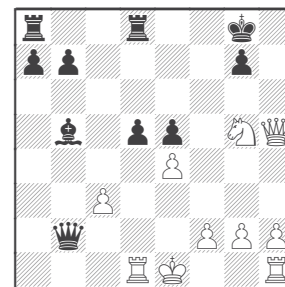
15.♖e4! The sneaky point. This is also a good moment to explain why **10...♖xd7** was alright. If Black plays **15...g6** here, White can take on c5 and then on d7. If Black had recaptured on d7 with the queen, the bishop would be back on c8, and then he'd have no problems.

15...♖c4 16.♖g5 ♖fd8 16...♖d3 achieves nothing thanks to **17.e4**.

17.♖xf7+ ♖h8 18.♖h5+ 18.h4 isn't as good, though it's still winning. Sadly

for Prie, he failed to reap the benefits of his great (OTB) novelty, and with dogged defense Svetushkin eked out a draw. **E.Prie 2504 - D.Svetushkin 2615, France 2009.**

18...♖g8 19.♖d1 ♖b5 Here's a surprisingly recent, high-level example. **19...e5 20.♖f7+ ♖h8 21.e4 ♖e7 22.♖xe7 ♖b5 23.♖d2 ♖xa2 24.♖f7 ♖a1+ 25.♖d1 ♖xb2 26.♖h5+ ♖g8**



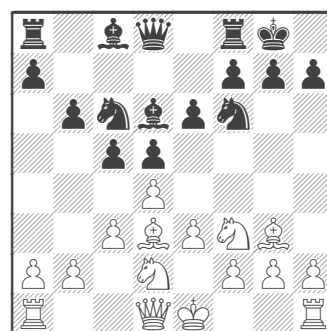
27.♖h7+ ♖f8 28.♖h8+ ♖e7 29.♖xg7+ ♖d6 30.♖xd5+ ♖c6 31.♖f6+ 1-0 G.Kamsky 2709 - S.Shankland 2611, Sturbridge 2014.

20.f4 d4 21.♖f7+ ♖h8 22.e4 was how the stem game concluded: **1-0** K.Koegler 2514 - T.Matheis 2354, ICCF email 2007. While **10...♖xd7** may equalize, Black subsequently turned his attention elsewhere, and we'll see next.

Sergey Karjakin 2769 - Michael Adams 2744

Wijk aan Zee 2016

1.d4 d5 2.♖f4 ♖f6 3.e3 e6 4.♖f3 c5 5.c3 ♖c6 6.♖bd2 ♖d6 7.♖g3 0-0 8.♖d3 b6



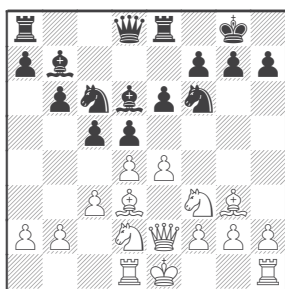
This multi-purpose move is the main line.

The bishop can go to b7, where it helps fight for the e4 square; and the c-pawn is overprotected, so the queen can go to c7 without dxc5 being a problem.

9.♖e5 The thematic choice, but White has two other important moves as well.

9.0-0 is not an important move: Black captures and enjoys easy equality. **9...♖xg3 10.hxg3 ♖b7** and Black will be fighting for the advantage.

9.♖e2 ♖b7 10.♖d1! ♖e8 11.e4 (11.♖e5 ♖c7 12.f4 ♖e7! 13.♖f3 ♖f5 14.♖f2 ♖f8! is fine for Black. The point, which we will see in the main game, is to keep control over e4, and Black is just in time to do so: 15.g4 ♖d6 16.g5 ♖fe4 Black is at least equal here.)

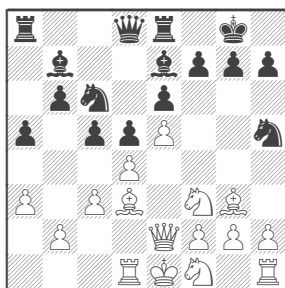


A) The very combative 11...e5 was tried by Fabiano Caruana 2807 against Le Quang Liem 2739 in the St. Louis Rapid & Blitz 2017. As they say, more tests are needed.

A1) 12.dxe5 was Le's choice, and now 12...xe5! appears to equalize. For example: 13.xe5 xe5 14.b5 dxe4! 15.0-0 (15.xe8? d3+ 16.f1 xe8+ is terrible for White. His tiny material advantage doesn't make up for the octopus on d3 and his clumsy kingside.) 15...e6 16.e4 (16.c4 d3=) 16...e7=;

A2) 12.dxc5! bxc5 13.exd5! e4 14.xe4 xg3 15.dxc6! xc6 16.hxg3 xa5 17.0-0 xe4 18.c4 xa2 19.d6 xf3 20.xf3 f8 21.g4!± maintains some pressure on Black's position;

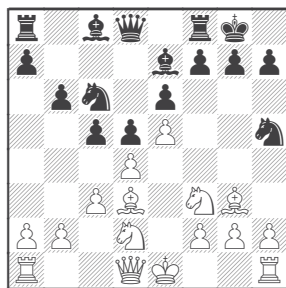
B) 11...e7! We'll also see this move after 9.e4. Black avoids the fork on e5 and is willing to face an open center – but only on his terms. 12.e5 h5 13.a3 White has done very well here, so the position is probably more dangerous for Black than the computer seems to suggest. Here is a suggestion: 13...a5 14.f1



...and now a novelty, but not a new idea: 14...c8!±, intending ...a6 to swap off the light squared bishops. After that Black will look to open the queenside. This looks like a decent solution to Black's problems.

▶ **9. e4 e7!** We've already seen this important idea. Black avoids the fork,

and is ready to meet 10.e5 with 10...h5, intending to capture on g3 only after White castles. (9...dxe4? 10.e4 xe4 11.xe4 b7 12.dxc5 xc5 13.a4±/± has been a disaster for Black, who has lost 11 of 13 games here and drawn the other two.) 10.e5 (10.e5 b7 may even favor Black; 10.exd5 xd5 11.c4 h5=) 10...h5



A) 11.a3 a5 12.e2 a7!? This move looks abstract, but the rook may help defend along the 7th rank. It's also a useful waiting move, waiting to see where White's king goes before deciding on ...c4 or ...cxd4. 13.0-0 c4! 14.c2 b5 15.h4 (15.h4 xg3 16.hxg3 g6) 15...xg3! (15...g6?! A.Grischuk 2774 - H.Nakamura 2816, Skopje 2015) 16.fxg3 b4 (16...f6; and 16...f5 are also playable – Black is a little better after both of these moves too.) 17.axb4 axb4 18.xc4 b3! 19.xb3 dxc4 20.xc4 b7+;

B) 11.g5 xg5 12.xh5 g6 13.e2 cxd4 14.h4 h6 15.h5 dxc3 16.bxc3 g7 17.f4 c7+ Black is a little better. B.Filipovic 2388 - B.Derakhshani 2302, Flims 2016. White's position on the kingside isn't bad, but the downside is not just the missing pawn but the further weakness of c3. Here are a couple of ideas for Black: ...a5-b7-c5, hitting the c2, and if it retreats then ...a6. Another idea is to play ...b7 and look for an opportunity to play ...d4. Of course, White will look for his opportunities on the kingside, so Black must hurry with

his counterplay.

9...b7 10.f4 10.0-0 is tame. After 10...c7 White can take on c6, which gives Black a very easy position, or play 11.f4 Here Black uses the maneuver we've already seen and will see again: 11...e7! 12.f3 (12.h4 e4) 12...f5 13.f2 e7! 14.g4 d6 15.g5 fe4 At best White is fighting for equality, at least in part because of the availability of ...f6.

10...e7!



The beginning of the critical maneuver. White wants to move the bishop from g3 and play g4-g5, castle, play f3-h3 and h5, and mate Black. Obviously this takes a while, but it's a plan, and if Black fiddles around on the queenside bad things will happen to him. So Black is going to plug up the e4 square in such a way that he deadens both of White's bishops.

11.f3 Otherwise Black can play ...e4.

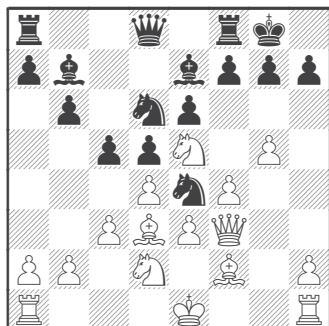
Oddly, Karjakin was on the black side of this line a few months before our main game, and seemed to know how to meet his opponent's caveman attack. Why did he switch to the white side later on? 11.c2 c4 12.e2 f5 (12...b5!?) 13.f2 e7 The same maneuver as in Karjakin - Adams. 14.g4

(14.g4 d6 15.g5 fe4 etc.) 14...xg4 15.xg4 d6+ Black is better, and the only reason he didn't win was because a draw clinched victory in his World Cup match with Andreikin. D.Andreikin 2720 - S.Karjakin 2762, Baku 2015.

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11...♖f5 12.♗f2 ♕e7! This move once again, clearing d6 for the knight on f5.
13.g4 ♘d6 14.g5 ♘fe4



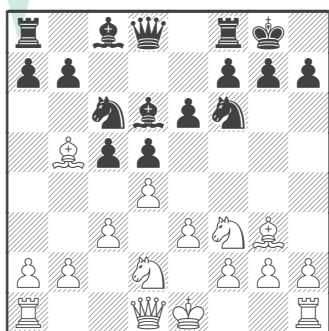
Black stands very well, and has a great score from this position. Adams goes on to win an impressive game.

15.0-0-0 c4 16.♗c2 b5 17.♖h3 b4!
18.♗xe4 dxe4 19.♗e1 ♗d5 20.♗g1 b3+
21.axb3 Better is 21.♗b1.
21...cxb3 22.♗b1 f5!?-+ 23.gxf6 ♗xf6
24.♗g4 ♘f5 25.♗d2 ♖a5 26.♗e2 ♗xe5
27.dxe5 ♗ad8 28.♗f2 ♖a1 29.♗d2 ♗c4
30.♖h5 ♖xb2 31.♗e1 ♗xd2!

White resigned

Carlsen and 8.♗b5

1.d4 d5 2.♗f4 ♘f6 3.e3 e6 4.♘f3 c5
5.c3 ♘c6 6.♘bd2 ♗d6 7.♗g3 0-0
8.♗b5!

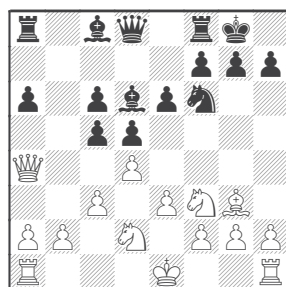


This move has taken over from 8.♗d3 as White's main try, and it has given Black all sorts of problems. (This is one of the reasons why 6.♘bd2 rather than 6.♗d3 ought to be played.) World champion Magnus Carlsen has been especially brutal with the white pieces in this line, and it has sent Black in search of alternatives on

move 6. The idea of 6.♗b5 is simple: prophylaxis against Black's freeing move ...e6-e5. If White can keep control over e5, he's going to stand better. It's also rather annoying, as attempts to develop with ...b6, ...♗d7, or ...♖c7 all blunder material to ♗xc6, ♗xd6, and dxc5, respectively. Black has focused his efforts on 8...♗e7, 8...♗xg3, and 8...a6, but without appreciable success, as we shall see.

8...♗xg3

8...a6 is the most direct way of dealing with the bishop: attack it. 9.♗xc6 bxc6 10.♖a4 (Carlsen played 10.♗e5 against Karjakin in 2015, but this move hasn't found many fans. Indeed, this is the only GM game with the move, which has only been played three times. Carlsen eventually lost the game, and it does seem that Black is doing well after 10...♖c7 or the computer's choice of 10...a5!)



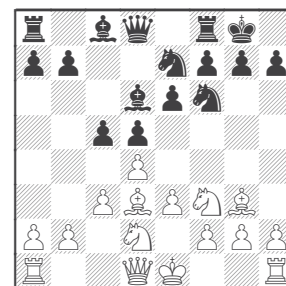
A) 10...♗xg3 11.hxg3 ♖b6 12.♖c2± favors White due to his play along the h-file and his good knight vs. Black's semi-bad bishop;

B) 10...cxd4 is a rare but interesting option. 11.cxd4 (11.♗xd6N ♖xd6 12.cxd4 may be a little better for White.) 11...♖b8 (11...♗e7!? is a very unobvious move suggested by the computer. If White can't find something better than the following, then 11.♗xd6 should be preferred. 12.♗e5 ♗d7 13.♗c1 c5 14.♗xd7 ♖xd7 15.♖xd7 ♗xd7 16.dxc5 ♗xc5 17.♗e2 ♗fc8=);

C) 10...♖b8 White has done very well here, and Carlsen's win over Anand looks like a

model game. 11.♖a3! ♗xg3 12.hxg3 cxd4?! (12...♖b6 is better, but not completely equal, after 13.0-0 ♗d7 14.♖ab1, as played in D.Jojua 2575 - D.Arutian 2530, Tbilisi 2017) 13.cxd4± a5 14.0-0 ♖b6 15.b3 (15.♗fc1 is even stronger.) 15...♗a6 16.♗fc1 ♗d7?! 17.♖d6± ♖a7 (17...♖d8 18.♗xc6 ♗b5 19.♗c3 is a relatively better option for Black, but it's still lousy.) 18.♗xc6+- ♗b5 19.♗c7 ♖b7 20.♗ac1 a4 21.♗xb7 ♖xb7 22.♗c7 ♖b8 23.♗xd7 ♗xd7 24.♖xd7 1-0 M.Carlsen 2840 - V.Anand 2779, Doha (blitz) 2016. Only a blitz game, but an instructive and thematic victory by the world champion.

8...♗e7 avoids the exchange, and while Black cannot now achieve ...e5 the knight may yet return to c6 (after ...a6) or go to g6 to help make it possible. Additionally, the knight may also move to f5. 9.♗d3



Did White gain a tempo or lose one? It depends on how one evaluates ...♗e7. We'll consider four options here.

A) 9...c4 This may be Black's best option.

A1) 10.♗b1 b5 11.♗h4!? was Wei Yi 2707 - Ganguly 2668, China 2016. Ganguly played 11...♗g6, but maybe Black doesn't need to fear ♗xf6. 11...♗b7!? (11...b4!?!);

A2) 10.♗c2 b5 11.e4 dxe4 12.♗xe4 ♗xe4 13.♗xe4 ♗d5 may be objectively equal, but I suspect that White's position is easier to handle. (13...♖b8!?!);

B) 9...♗f5 is interesting. Here a popular plan is to swap everything and play for the better structure: 10.♗xf5 exf5 11.♗xd6 ♖xd6 12.dxc5 ♖xc5 13.0-0± Black is not in trouble, but this looks like a very safe and pleasant way for White to proceed;

C) 9...♗g6 10.♗xg6 hxg6 11.♗xd6 ♖xd6 12.♗e5± offers White a small but persistent plus based on his good knight on e5 against Black's less effective bishop. One small problem for Black is

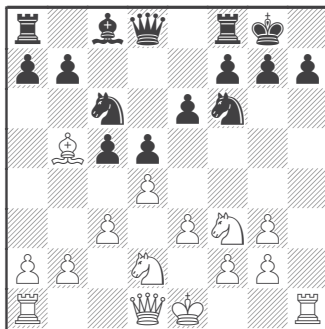
that ...f6 is harder to achieve with Black's h-pawn now on g6;

D) 9...b6 10.e4 dxe4 (10...♙xg3 11.hxg3 dxe4 12.♗xe4 ♗g6 was seen in a 2016 rapid game between Carlsen and Korobov. Black went on to win that game, but not because of the opening. Black was worse after Carlsen's 13.dxc5, but if the champ had played 13.♗e5!±/+- instead Korobov would already be in danger of a quick loss.) 11.♗xe4 White has scored heavily here (6.5/7), with the most noteworthy and impressive win featuring Carlsen at the helm. 11...♗xe4 12.♙xe4 ♖b8?! (12...♗d5 was better, avoiding the tactical problems that ensue. Still, White keeps an advantage after 13.dxc5 ♙xc5 14.0-0 ♙b7 15.♖e1±) 13.dxc5! ♙xc5 14.hxg3± f5? (14...♗xd1+ is forced, when White is clearly better but not yet winning after 15.♗xd1 f5 16.♙d3 bxc5 17.♗c2±) 15.♗xd8 ♖xd8 16.c6+- ♗d5 17.♙xd5 ♖xd5 18.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 19.♗xd1 ♙a6 20.♗e5 ♖c8 21.c4 b5 22.b4! bxc4 23.a4! ♖d8+ 24.♗c2 ♖d5 25.f4 1-0 M.Carlsen 2840 - M.Bosicic 2591, Doha (blitz) 2016. A great win by Carlsen. One could easily imagine winning the very same game in a club tournament at a classical time control;

▶ 8...♙e7 is a surprising move that hasn't been tried in any top-level games, but the computer likes it and Jan Gustafsson recommends it. It looks odd, as if Black is not just surrendering a tempo but seems to be

completely abdicating his responsibilities to fight for the e5 square. But there is of course an upside: Black threatens ...♗h5 (see the next section!) and ...♗b6. Perhaps the top players have some sneaky idea in mind here, but at first glance this looks pretty good. What follows is a cooperative line given by Gustafsson to show that the tactics work out nicely for Black in one key line. 9.0-0 ♗h5 10.♙xc6 ♗xg3! (10...bxc6? 11.♗e5 ♗xg3 12.♗xc6! ♗d6 13.♗xe7+ ♗xe7 14.hxg3± gives White a clean extra pawn.) 11.hxg3 (11.♙xb7? White will lose the battle of desperados. 11...♙xf1 12.♙xa8 ♗xd2 13.♗xd2 ♙d7 14.♙b7 ♗b6+- There's the problem, as noted by Gustafsson.) 11...bxc6± This has occurred in a couple of games, both of which were won by White, but that's more a function of a rating advantage than the desirability of his position.

9.hxg3



9...♗b6 seems to be Black's latest try against 8.♙b5, with a cavalcade of strong-to-super-elite GMs trying this in 2017 – most notably Caruana, Karjakin, and Kasimdzhanov – and losing practically every time. The danger is that Black will wind up with a bad bishop against a good knight – generally sitting on e5 – but it isn't clear that White is objectively better.

10.a4 h6! 10...a6 11.♙xc6 bxc6 12.♗c2 ♖b8 13.♖b1± cxd4 14.cxd4 a5 15.♗e5 h6 16.g4 ♖b7?! 17.f4±/+- As usual, White has a great knight against a dud bishop, and Black has other problems too – the h-file and the c-file, for instance. Unsurprisingly, Wesley So went on to win from here against Karjakin. W.So 2812 - S.Karjakin 2781, Stavanger (blitz) 2017.

11.0-0 11.♗c2 ♙d7 12.♗e5 ♖fc8 13.♙xc6 ♙xc6 14.♗b3 cxd4 15.exd4 ♙e8 is at least equal for Black, who hopes to continue with ...♗e4, ...f6, and ...♙g6. D.Naroditsky 2646 - J.Xiong 2674, chess.com 2017.

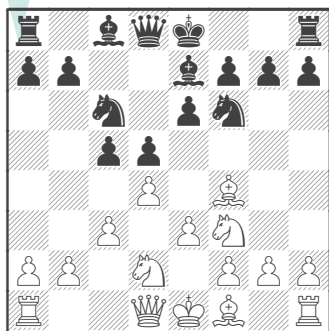
11...♗e7 11...♙d7.

12.♗b3 ♗c7 13.a5 ♙d7 14.♙e2 ♗g6 15.♗a3! c4?! 15...♖fc8 improves, and may produce equal chances.

16.b3! cxb3 17.♗xb3± 17.♙d3 is even better. M.Carlsen 2832 - F.Caruana 2808, Paris (blitz) 2017.

Aronian's 6...♙e7

1.d4 d5 2.♙f4 ♗f6 3.e3 e6 4.♗f3 c5 5.c3 ♗c6 6.♗bd2 ♙e7

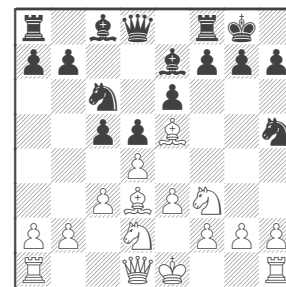


This is Aronian's pet line, which he has played four times in 2016 and 2017.

The basic idea is to play ...♗h5, to swap off White's London bishop for a knight rather than the bishop. White can create a cubbyhole for the bishop on h2 by playing h3, but then we'll see a second clever point to Black's idea.

7.h3

▶ 7.♙d3 ♗h5 8.♙e5 (8.dxc5 ♗xf4 9.exf4 ♙xc5= offers a fresh sort of position. A recent all-GM game continued 10.♗b3 ♙d6 11.g3 ♗f6 12.♗e2 ♙d7 13.0-0 0-0-0 14.♗bd4 h6 15.♙b5 ♗xd4 16.cxd4 ♙xb5 17.♗xb5 ♗b8=, but there were numerous improvements along the way for both sides. D.Naroditsky 2626 - Li Ruifeng 2548, Saint Louis 2017) 8...0-0 (8...♗xe5 is the most common move, but Black can delay the exchange as well.)



A) After 9.h4 f5 10.♙h2 White has preserved the bishop from exchange, but after 10...♗f6=♖ this knight will be well-placed on e4 or g4;

B) 9.g4 f6 10.gxh5 (10.♙g3 gives White the open h-file after 10...♗xg3 11.hxg3, but there's little he can do with it. 11...g6 12.♗c2 ♗g7±) 10...fxe5 11.dxe5 ♗h8±



followed by ...♔d7-e8, with more than enough compensation for the pawn;

C) 9.♘g5 ♕xg5 10.♖xh5 g6 11.♗e2 cxd4 12.exd4 f6 13.♙g3 e5 14.dxe5 ♖xe5N is a little better for Black;

D) 9.0-0 ♖xe5 10.♖xe5 g6 11.dxc5 ♕xc5 12.c4 ♗f6 13.♖df3 ♔d6= N.Nguyen 2629 - L.Aronian 2785, Doha 2016;

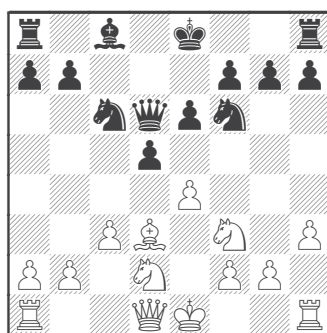
► 7.♖e5 ♖d7 8.♙d3 0-0 (8...♖cxe5 9.dxe5 g5!? 10.♙g3 h5 is a very sharp alternative.) 9.♗h5 f5 10.♖df3 (10.g4 ♖f6 11.♗h3 cxd4N 12.exd4 ♖xe5 13.♕xe5 ♖xg4 14.♖f3 ♖xe5 15.♖xe5 b5!?) 10...♖dxe5 11.♖xe5 ♖xe5 12.♕xe5 ♔d6 13.f4 ♕xe5 14.fxe5 ♔d7 is fine for Black. Castling queenside would be too risky, so here Adhiban castled short to keep things under control. The game remained balanced the rest of the way. 15.0-0 ♗b6 16.♗f2 ♕b5 17.♕xb5 ♗xb5 18.♗af1 ♗d3 19.♗f3 B.Adhiban 2653 - L.Aronian 2780, Wijk aan Zee 2017.

7...♙d6! There it is! Now there's no point to dropping the bishop back to g3 (or h2), as Black will capture without opening the h-file against his kingside. As Suat Atalik points out in CB Magazine 180, this trick goes (at least) as far back

as Tigran Petrosian (the former world champion), who used a version of this with Black in the Exchange Slav.

8.dxc5 8.♙xd6 ♗xd6 9.♕b5 ♔d7 10.0-0 0-0= is completely fine for Black, who threatens to engineer some exchanges with ...♖xd4; 8.♖e5 ♗c7 9.♕b5 0-0 10.♕xc6 bxc6 11.0-0 H.Nakamura 2787 - L.Aronian 2792, Leuven (blitz) 2016. 11...cxd4 12.cxd4 c5 13.♗c1 ♗b8=.

8...♕xc5 9.♙d3 ♔d6 10.♕xd6 ♗xd6 11.e4

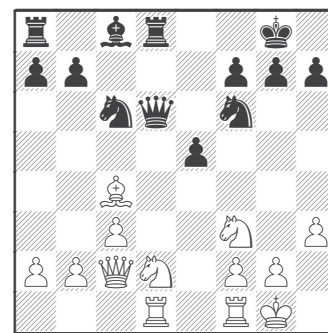


11...e5?! This looks premature, though it is a move Black wants to make as soon as he safely can. 11...0-0! 12.0-0 (12.♗e2 e5!); 12.♗c2 h6 13.0-0 b6 14.♗ad1

♗c7=) 12...♔d8! 13.♗e2 dxe4 14.♕xe4 ♖xe4 (14...b6 15.♕c2 ♗c7 16.♗ad1 h6 17.♖e4 ♖d5 18.♗fe1 ♕b7=) 15.♖xe4 ♗e7= followed by e5, with equality.

12.0-0 12.exd5 ♗xd5 13.♗e2 ♕e6 14.0-0 ♔d8 15.♕c4 ♗d6 16.♕xe6 (16.♕b5 0-0 17.♗fe1 ♖d7 18.♖e4±) 16...♗xe6 17.♗fe1 0-0 18.♖c4 ♖d7 19.♗ad1 f6 20.b4±.

12...0-0 13.exd5 ♗xd5 14.♗c2± ♔d8 15.♕c4 ♗d6?! 16.♗ad1±



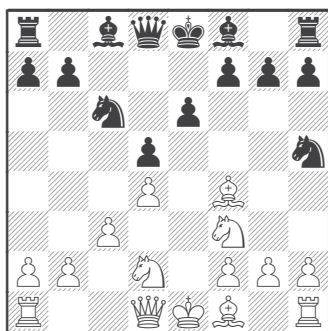
16...♕e6 17.♖e4 ♗e7 18.♕xe6 ♗xe6? **19.♖fg5+–** White will follow up with ♖xf6+ and ♗xh7+. Black is lost, and went on to lose in the game Wei Yi 2707 - L.Aronian 2785, Doha (blitz) 2016.

The hot 6...cxd4 7.exd4 ♖h5

1.d4 d5 2.♙f4 ♖f6 3.e3 e6 4.♖f3 c5 5.c3 ♖c6 6.♖bd2 Finally, we come to what is currently the hottest line in this system.

6...cxd4 7.exd4 7.cxd4 ♗b6 8.♗b3 (8.♗b1 ♖h5=?) 8...♗xb3 9.♖xb3 ♖h5=.

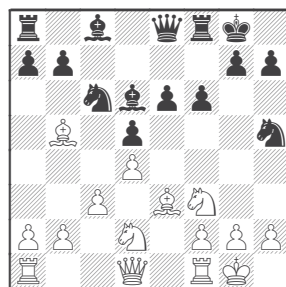
7...♖h5



This is it. Black's plan is very concrete and direct: chase the bishop off its diagonal, then play ...♙d6.

8.♙e3

► 8.♙g5 f6 This is a useful move, and it's not such a problem for the knight on h5. A knight on the rim is dim, but he'll be happier once he moves to f4, or to g7 (after ...g6), whence he might come to f5. 9.♙e3 ♔d6 10.g3 (10.♖e5?! is harmless, and 10...g6 is almost always part of Black's plan. White is thus forcing Black to do something he wants to do, and is wasting time with his knight to make it happen; 10.♙d3 ♖f4 11.♕xf4 ♕xf4=; 10.♕b5 has enjoyed success in a couple of Karjakin's games. 10...0-0 11.0-0 Black has more than one reasonable continuation, but I'll propose a novelty. 11...♗e8N



The idea is to play ...g5, which couldn't be played on the previous move because of 12.♖xg5 fxg5 13.♗xh5. And if White now plays 12.g3, both 12...g5 and 12...f5, intending ...f4, look promising.) 10...0-0 11.♙g2 (11.♖h4 hasn't been tried in human games, but in a recent CB Magazine article (in issue 180) Dutch IM Robert Ris proposes this move based on some computer games. 11...g6 12.♙g2 ♖g7 13.0-0 g5 14.♖hf3 ♖f5 15.♖e1 b6 16.♖c2 ♕a6 17.♗e1 is his main line, which doesn't look at all plausible for a game between humans – certainly White's play doesn't look particularly natural. From here Black has more than one acceptable continuation, ...♗c8 or ...♗d7. It seems that Black is doing well here.) 11...f5 12.♖g5 (12.♖e5? f4! 13.♗xh5 fxg3 14.fxg3 was A.Giri 2771 - W.So 2794, London 2016. So captured on e5 with the knight, keeping a slight advantage, but it would have been even better to play 14...♕xe5!N 15.dxe5 ♔d7±)



12...♖f6= M.Erdogdu 2446 - S.Ter Sahakyan 2581, Skopje 2017;

▶ 8.♙e5?! has been played by a couple of very strong GMs, but doesn't look very good. 8...f6 9.♙g3 g6 occurred most recently in the super-GM battle between Wang Yue 2699 and Le Quang Liem 2739, Ashkhabad 2017, won by Black.

▶ 8.♙g3 is another minor move that doesn't cause Black any real problems. 8...g6 (or 8...♙e7= should be fine, but it's better not to rush with ...♖xg3.) 9.♙e2 ♖xg3 Now taking is fine, as the bishop on e2 won't help create any problems against h7. 10.hxg3 ♙g7=.

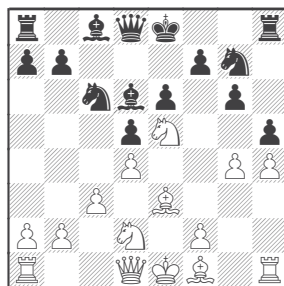
8...♙d6 9.♙e5 9.g3 has only been played three times out of 40 games, but since Grischuk was one of the players it deserves a quick mention. 9...0-0 10.♙d3 f5 (10...♙f6!? Black doesn't want to do this when White can grab the e5 square, but this might be a case where he can't.) 11.♙e5 ♙f6 12.♙df3

A.Grischuk 2761 - H.Nakamura 2785, Paris (rapid) 2017. (12.f4 ♙d7 13.0-0 ♙e8 14.♙e2 ♖e7 (Ris, computers) may be a little better for White, but not much due to Black's control over e4.) 12...♙g4! 13.♙f4 ♙gxe5 14.dxe5 is another line by Ris based on computer games that he assesses as ±/=; I'm inclined to reverse the symbols. White has more space, but if Black can solve the problem of his light-squared bishop he will be fine. This could occur by bringing it to b5, but a likelier scenario involves swinging it around to h5.

9...g6 9...♙f6?! 10.f4 is promising for White.

10.♙e2

▶ 10.g4 ♙g7 11.h4 h5 (11...♙xe5 12.dxe5 ♙xe5 is very risky, but may be playable. 13.♙f3 ♙f6 14.h5 0-0 15.♖d2 d4!= G.Kamsky 2659 - H.Nakamura 2793, Saint Louis 2017)



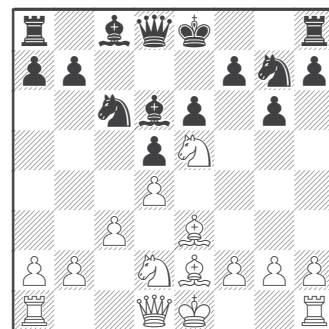
A) 12.♙df3N hxg4 13.♙xg4 f6 (13...♙f5 14.♙g5 ♙e7=) 14.♙d3 ♙f5 15.♖d2 ♙d7 One natural plan for Black is to play ...♖e7, castle long, and double rooks on the h-file. 16.♙f4 ♙xf4 17.♖xf4 ♖e7 18.0-0-0 0-0-0= Gustafsson (and the computer) consider this position equal. Black has at least two very reasonable plans to choose from: doubling rooks on the h-file, or playing ...♙df8 followed by ...♖d8-c7 to chase White's queen from the important h2-b8 diagonal;

B) 12.♙g5 ♖b6 13.♙f6 ♙g8= White's position looks better than it is. 14.♙b3 (14.♖f3?! ♙xe5! 15.dxe5 hxg4 16.♖xg4 ♙h5= N.Sedlak 2523 - A.Shimanov 2642, Minsk 2017) 14...a5 15.a4 ♙xe5 16.dxe5 hxg4 17.♙b5 ♙h5 18.♖xg4 ♙d7 19.♖g5 ♙xf6 20.♖xf6 ♖d8= White had to play well to maintain

equality, more so than Black.

▶ 10.♙b5 0-0!? 11.♙xc6?! (11.♙e2 ♙g7 12.♙df3 ♙f5=) 11...bxc6 12.♙xc6 ♙b8=; 10.♙df3 f6 11.♙g4 ♙d7N 12.g3 ♖e7!? is an interesting move, preparing queenside castling. It's risky, but worth considering. (12...♙g7=; 12...0-0=).

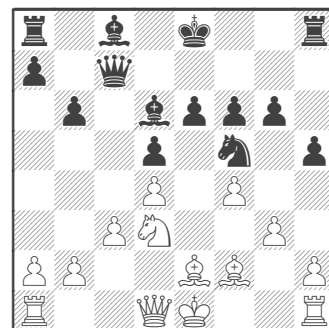
10...♙g7 Black will often play ...f6, ...♙f5, and ...h5.



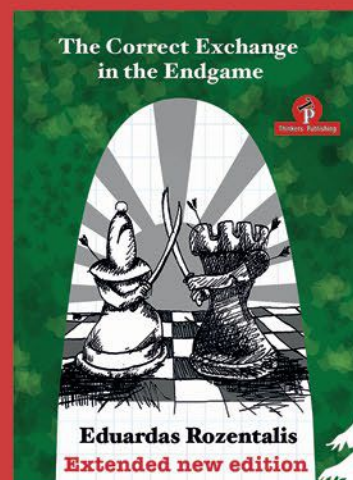
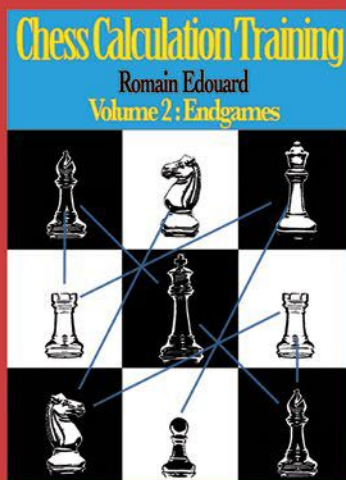
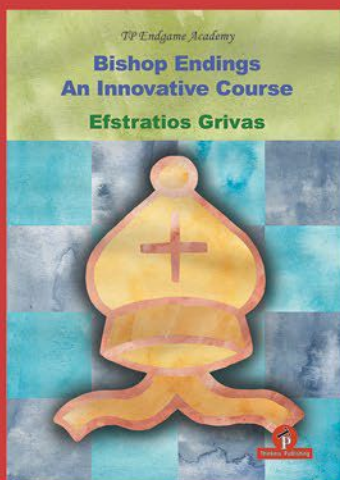
11.f4 f6 12.♙d3 ♙f5 13.♙f2 h5 Case in point.

14.♙f3 ♖c7 15.♙h4 15.g3 b6=.

15...♙ce7 16.♙xf5 ♙xf5 17.g3 b6=



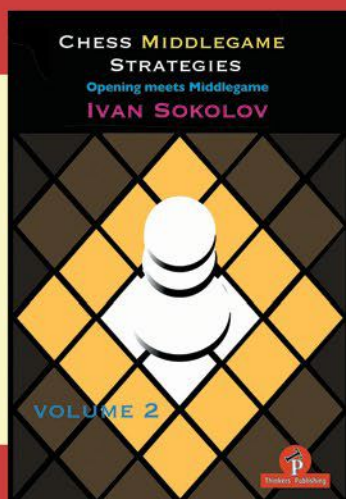
White won after mutual errors in C.Sandipan 2573 - M.Kobalia 2628, Moscow 2017, but Black has nothing to complain about here. The king goes to f7 (and then probably to g7), and on the queenside ...a5 and ...♙a6 or ...♙b7 makes sense. In theory Black would like to play for ...e5, but that's not going to be plausible any time soon. More maneuvering will be required, and another idea for Black is one we've seen in some other lines: ...♙e7 followed by ...♙d6-e4. For White, the possible pawn breaks are a4-a5, c4, and g4, and he can also hope for some pressure along the e-file if/when Black's bishop goes to b7 or a6. The chances are equal, but I'd rather have Black here.



ALWAYS ONE MOVE AHEAD

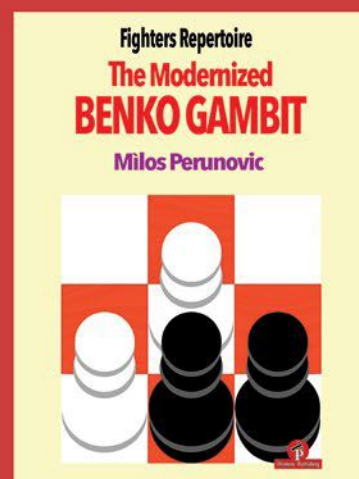
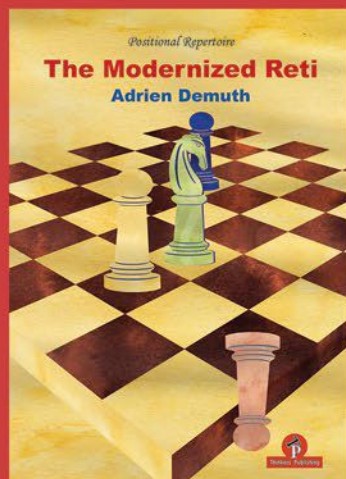
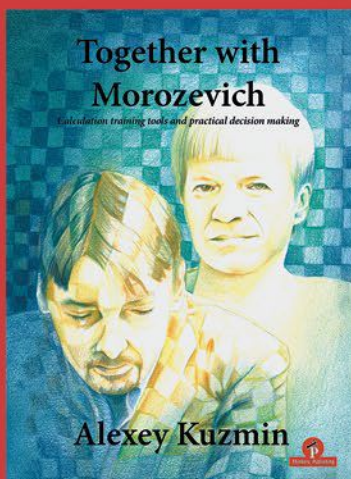


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WINTER
2017-2018

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The New Art of Positional Play

Centralization, pressure on the diagonals and files, exploiting weak squares and vulnerable and backward pawns and even zugzwang – in one game!



by **GM John Fedorowicz**

A WHOLE BAG of POSITIONAL TRICKS



Wesley So has been a member of the so called “Big Three” for a few years now. – the other two being Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura. Despite being only 22 years of age he is considered a

potential world championship contender. Here he takes care of French GM Yannick Gozzoli in fine positional style.

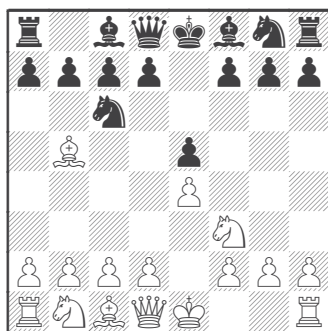
C84

Wesley So	2808
Yannick Gozzoli	2583

PRO League Group Stage
chess.com international, 2017

1.e4 e5 The “double e-pawn” has been a solid choice for Black vs. 1.e4 since the beginning of time.

2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5

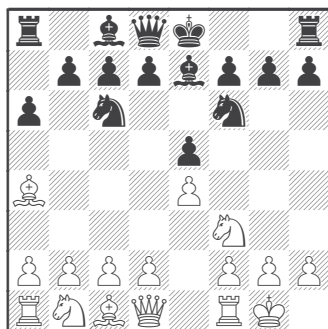


On the GM level the Ruy Lopez is almost always the pick. It provides complications while not going too crazy. The King's Gambit is seen rarely and the Scotch occasionally.

3...a6 We see the move order 3...d6 4.d3 a lot nowadays. It dodges the Berlin Defense line, 4.0-0 dxe4 5.d4 d6 6.exxc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 d5 8.♖xd8+ ♔xd8, that Vladimir Kramnik used to defeat Garry Kasparov in the World Championship match in London 2000. In this way, Kasparov's white pieces were completely neutralized, allowing Kramnik to score when he had the first move. Somebody once told me if I worked hard and found a refutation to the "Berlin Defense" I would become a millionaire! After 4.d3 play might continue 4...d6 5.c3 e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♞e1 g4!?. I once read that this move should be played only when there is tension on d4. Here there is no tension and after 8.h3 g5 9.d6 10.♞f1 g6 11.g3 gxf3 12.♞xf3 White will get strong play on the light squares.

4.♞a4 In present times the exchange variation, 4.exxc6 dxc6 5.0-0, poses no great difficulties for Black. I believe each of the three main replies, 5...♞d6, 5...♞f6 and 5...f6, give Black a comfortable game.

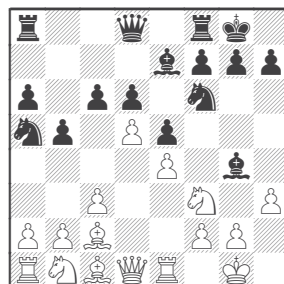
4...d6 5.0-0 ♞e7



6.d3!? This is one of the "Anti-Marshall"

lines: If readers are looking for a defense to 1.e4 then the Marshall Gambit would be a good choice. This variation, which can be played after 6.♞e1, goes 6...b5 7.♞b3 0-0 8.c3 d5 9.exd5 dxd5 10.♞xe5 dxe5 11.♞xe5 c6, and has been a reliable and safe choice for many decades. If there are any complaints about the Marshall it is that it is too drawish, which is a ridiculous statement in and of itself. Play usually then continues 12.d4 d6 13.♞e1 ♖h4 14.g3 ♖h3 15.♞e3 g4 16.♞d3 ♞ae8 17.d2 ♞e6.

Another Anti-Marshall is 6.♞e1 b5 7.♞b3 0-0 8.d4 d6 9.c3 g4!?. This is the correct time for this bishop development. 10.d5 d6 11.♞c2 c6 12.h3



12...♞c8 (12...♞d7 allows a trick, picking up the bishop pair: 13.♞xe5! dxe5 14.d6; 12...♞xf3 13.♞xf3 cxd5 14.exd5 dxc4 15.d2 d6 16.f1) 13.dxc6 ♞c7 and Black will recapture on c6 with a solid position. Or 6.♞e1 b5 (If Black plays 6...d6 first, then after a subsequent ...b5 the white bishop can retreat to c2 when Black doesn't have ...d6) 7.♞b3 0-0 8.h3 is yet another "Anti-Marshall".

6...b5 7.♞b3 d6 After Black protects the e5 pawn, he threatens ...d6 attacking the bishop on b3.

8.a4 Providing a retreat square on a2 and creating tension on b5.

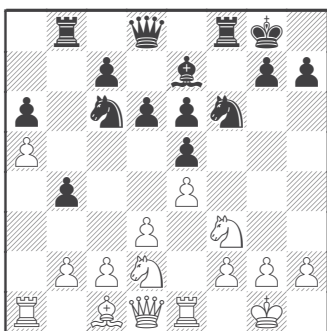
8...b4 9.a5!? The short term idea is to prevent Black's ...d6 or ...a5, while in the long term b4 and a6 are possible targets.

9...0-0 10.d2 ♞b8 On principle, moving the d-pawn twice doesn't seem correct, and in fact after 10...d5?! 11.exd5 dxd5 12.♞e1 g6 13.d4 ♞e8 14.♞a4!? White has pressure on both the a4-e8 diagonal and the e-file.

11.♞e1 ♞e6 12.♞xe6 fxe6



GM John Fedorowicz, "The Fed," elected to the Chess Hall of Fame in 2009, earned his international grandmaster title in 1986. He played in 21 U.S. championships and was a two-time U.S. Olympic Team member and captain. He five times tied for first at the World Open and was a 1980 U.S. Open co-champion. In his teens, he won two US Junior Invitationals and the 1975 National High School Championship.



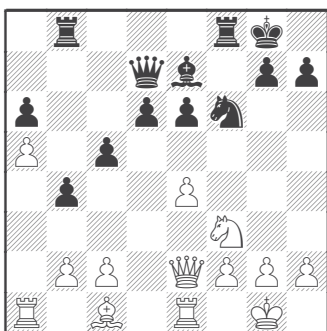
Black's doubled pawns form a wall protecting the central squares and are by no means weak. Black should take care not to play ...d5 which would weaken the central structure.

13. ♖b3!? 13.c3 ♖b5 14.c4 ♖b8 15. ♖b3 ♖c8 16. ♗e2 ♘d7 17.d4 exd4 18. ♖bxd4 ♘xd4 19. ♖xd4 ♗e5 20.f4 c5 21. ♖b3 ♖c6 22. ♗e3 e5 23.f5 ♗f6 24. ♖d3 ♘d4 was solid for Black in M.Adams - R.Wojtaszek, Shamkir 2017.

13... ♖e8 14.d4 exd4 15. ♖bxd4 ♘xd4 16. ♖xd4 ♖d7 Another option is **16... ♗f7**, going for cheapos on the f-file, but I like keeping the queen centralized. After **16... ♗f7!? 17. ♖e2 ♘xe4 18. ♖c6! ♖be8 19. ♖xb4** White's passed a-pawn is lurking.

17. ♖e2 c5 17...e5? 18. ♖c4+ ♗h8 19. ♖c6 wins either a6 or b4 and maybe both.

18. ♖f3



18...e5 I believe Black was afraid of White's e4-e5 advance, as in the case of **18... ♖b5!? 19. ♖xb5 ♖xb5 20.e5 dxe5 21. ♖xe5**. White then has the better pawn structure and soon a strong ♖c4. I too would have gone for this.

19. ♗g5!? White plays the solid

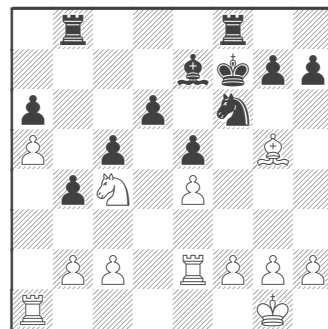


Wesley So.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

pawn lives Black is done. **21. ♗g5** (There is also an immediate **21. ♖d2 ♖a8 22. ♖c4** to defend the a-pawn and hit d6.) **21... ♖a8 22.a6 ♖b6 23.a7 ♖b7 24. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 25. ♖d2 ♖bxa7 26. ♖xa7 ♖xa7 27. ♖c4 ♗e7 28. ♖d1** and White is positionally better, but breaking through looks difficult. Black can then continue with either **28... ♖a6** or **28... ♖a2!?**.

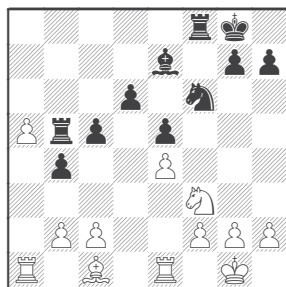
19... ♖b5 Trading queens will keep White tied to the defense of a5.

20. ♖d2 ♖xe2 21. ♖xe2 ♗f7 22. ♖c4



positional move, but the pawn could have been taken. The faster time control in the Pro Chess League might have something to do with Wesley going for this "safety first" approach.

I think White preferred to keep the tension rather than play **19. ♖xa6!?**, when calculations show that White can keep the a-pawn, but at the cost of e4. Then **19... ♖b5** (Also there is **19... ♖a8 20. ♖c4+ ♗h8 21.a6 ♖a7**; or **19... ♖b5) 20. ♖xb5 ♖xb5**



It takes just a quick glance at the well placed knight on c4 to realize White has an edge: however, let's take a closer look and figure out what plan is best for White here. It would be worthwhile for the reader to stop here and figure out a plan, then read what follows.

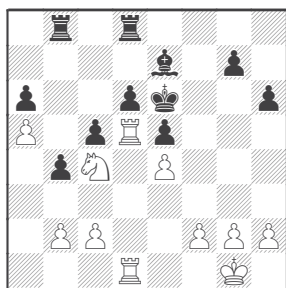
Let's start with White's knight. It's better on c4 than d5 because a knight on d5 isn't really doing anything other than looking nice. The ♖c4 attacks the weak d6 pawn and in combination with doubling rooks on the d-file, this exerts a lot of pressure. Yes, Black can defend d6, but at what cost, and what should White's plan be from there?

22... ♖e8 Black gives up the bishop that is defending d6, so as then to cover that pawn with the knight. If you were White and Black had played **22...h6**, would you have retreated the bishop to save it, or exchanged it? In this case you can get a

Now it all depends on surrounding the passed a-pawn and capturing it. If the



good knight vs. bad bishop position after 23.♙xf6! ♖xf6 24.♞d1 ♜fd8 25.♞ed2 ♜e6 26.♞d5.



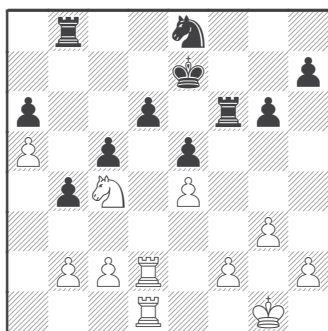
And now that you have Black tied down to defending d6, you have to advance your kingside pawn majority with g3 and f4 with tremendous pressure on e5. If Black tries ...g7-g5 to stop it, the creation of a whole weak light square complex on the kingside will prove a major problem for the future.

23.♙xe7 ♜xe7 24.♞d1 The usual procedure is to put pressure on the backward d6 pawn.

24...♞f6 25.♞ed2 Keeping Black tied up while building up slowly.

25...g6 This move doesn't help or hurt.

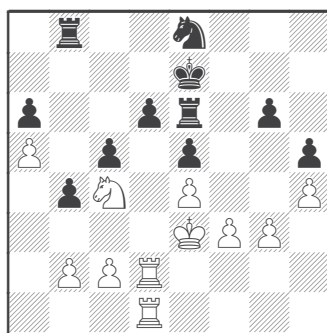
26.g3



26...♞b5?! I believe this to be the losing move. This rook should try to play defense from b7.

27.♙f1 ♞e6 28.♙e2 ♞f6 Or 28...♞b7!? 29.♞d5 ♞f6 30.♙e3 ♞e6 31.h4 ♞f6 32.f4 exf4+ 33.gxf4 and it seems as if White is breaking through, no matter where the rook is.

29.h4 ♞e6 30.♙e3 h5 31.f3 ♞b8



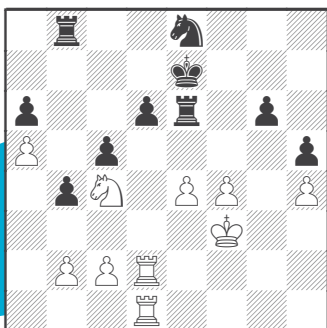
32.f4! White's idea of fxe5 will offer targets on both e5 and c5.

32...exf4+ Not happy about it, but still forced. I don't see any decent alternatives.

33.gxf4 Black hopes that keeping the ♖c4 bound to the a5 pawn will be enough for drawing chances.

33...♞b5 This try fails as does 33...d5 34.♞xd5 ♖f6 35.♞xc5 ♖xe4 36.♞e5.

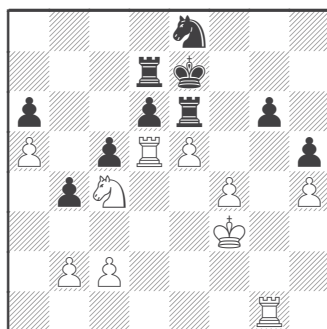
34.♙f3 ♞b8



35.e5! The point of this move is to weaken Black's pawn structure and open the d-file for a possible rook penetration.

35...♞d8 36.♞d5! Eyeing the c5 pawn.

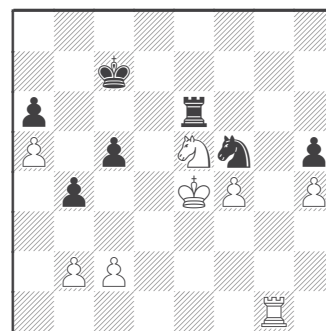
36...♞d7 37.♞g1!



This move creates a surprising zugzwang which wins the game.

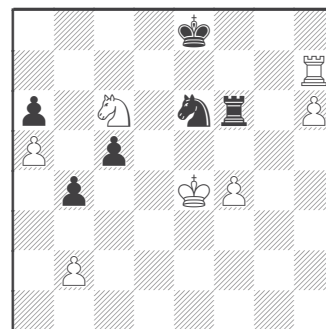
37...dxe5 38.♞xd7+ ♜xd7 39.♖xe5+ ♜c7 40.♖xg6 Now g6 has fallen and h5 is in bad shape.

40...♖d6 41.♖e5 ♖f5 42.♙e4



42...♞f6 42...♖xh4 43.♞g7+ ♜c8 44.♞g5 cleans up. White's f5-pawn is very dangerous and the knight on h4 is in trouble.

43.♞g5 ♖d4 44.♞xh5 ♖xc2 45.♞h7+ ♜d8 46.h5 ♖d4 47.h6 ♖e6 48.♖c6+ ♙e8



49.♙e5

Black resigned

Winning material and ending the game. These types of "Anti-Marshall" and "Anti-Berlin" lines take on a very positional flavor. Just by looking at where the pieces of both players are located, we see that chances for any mating attack are slim. Thus White must steadily increase the pressure on Black's constricted position and then make a properly timed breakthrough. It's a real chess struggle!

THE NOTORIOUS 'GRANDMASTER DRAW'

...may be more than meets the eye!

When we see a top level game ending in a draw in about 30 moves, with no sign of sacrifices or spectacular moves of any kind, it all seems so colorless. There is no aesthetic pleasure, no suspense, and the only benefit we might gain is knowledge of some subtle opening novelty. So do we therefore conclude that these players weren't in a fighting mood and the game was just another example of the notorious "grandmaster draw"?

By **GM Michael Adams** and **GM Baskiran Adhiban**



Photo by Lennart Ootes.



Photo by David Llada.

To get some answers we asked two top GMs to analyze their grandmaster draws... Why did they choose to play this or that opening variation against their opponent? Which moves particularly concerned them, but never appeared on the board? What was the train of thought that led the players to agree a draw? Were they in fact both satisfied with a peaceful draw in the first place?

Perhaps only then, after getting inside the grandmaster's mind, will we discover to our great surprise that there is an entire eco-system lying just beneath the surface of these "boring" draws...

E16

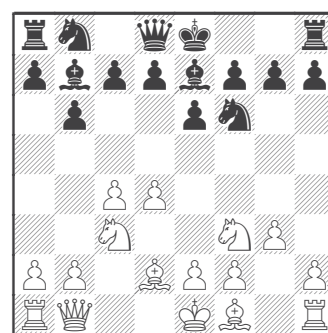
Anish Giri	2769
Michael Adams	2761

Shenzhen 2017

Annotated by GM Michael Adams

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♙b4+ 5.♙d2 ♙e7 6.♘c3 ♙b7 I thought this rare line might surprise Anish but he immediately responded with a clever novelty.

7. ♙b1



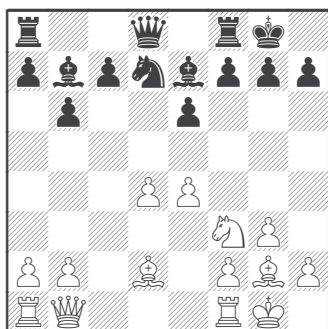


7...d5 The obvious 7...c5 8.d5 exd5 9.cxd5 ♗xd5 (9...♖xd5 10.♞e4 f5 11.♞xf5 ♖xc3 12.♗xc3 looks a bit shaky) 10.♖xd5 ♖xd5 11.♞f5 gives White nice compensation. 7...0-0 8.♗g2 c5?! (8...d5 is similar to the game) 9.d5 doesn't look good.

8.cxd5 ♖xd5 8...exd5 is possible: 9.♗g2 0-0 10.0-0 and now 10...♖bd7 11.b4 shows another positive aspect to White's queen placement.

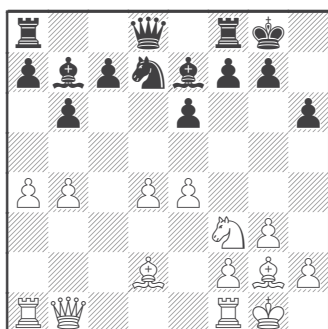
9.♗g2 ♖d7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖xd5 ♗xd5 I didn't like 11...exd5 12.b4 but it may have been the lesser evil.

12.e4 ♗b7



13.b4! h6 White has grabbed a lot of space and really I had to fight back with the shaky looking 13...f5! 14.♞e1 (14. exf5 ♞xf5) 14...fxe4 (14...♗xe4 15.♞xe4 fxe4 16.♞xe4 leaves my light squares too vulnerable) 15.♞xe4 ♖h8! (In fact I was thinking more about 15...♗d5 but 16.♞e1! is a good response) in order to limit White's advantage.

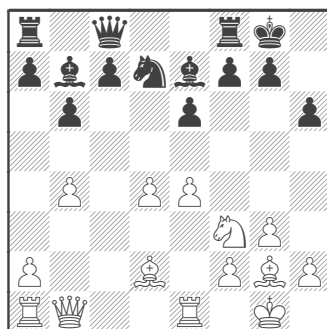
14.♞e1 The correct plan was to tighten White's grip with another pawn advance. 14.a4!



...is good immediately as my last move

means 14...f5 no longer works: 15.exf5 ♞xf5 16.♖h4! ♗xg2 17.♖xf5 ♗xf1 18.♖xh6+ gxh6 19.♞g6+ ♖h8 20.♞xh6+ ♖g8 21.♞xe6+ ♖h8 22.♞xf1.

14...♞c8



15.b5 By now I was getting seriously concerned about 15.a4! ♞d8 16.a5 when it is hard to find a sensible move since 16...c5 17.dxc5 bxc5 18.b5 leaves White strategically winning. However Anish's move lets me off the hook as I am able to swap a pair of rooks, and a few pawns, and find some activity for my other major pieces on the queenside.

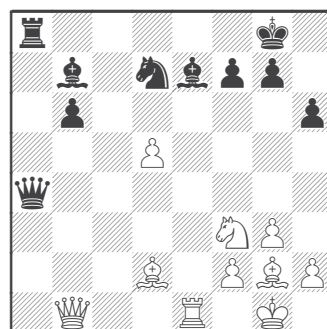
15...a6 16.a4 ♞d8! There's no hurry to swap on b5, as White does not have many useful moves.

17.♗c3 axb5 18.axb5 c5! Forcing White to capture immediately.

19.bxc6 ♞xc6 20.♞xa8 ♞xa8 21.♗d2 After 21.♗b4 ♗xb4 22.♞xb4 the active 22...♞c2 or the solid 22...♞c7 are both quite viable.

21...♞a4 22.d5 Black has no problems after 22.♗e3 ♞c8 but I am well prepared for this thematic central breakthrough.

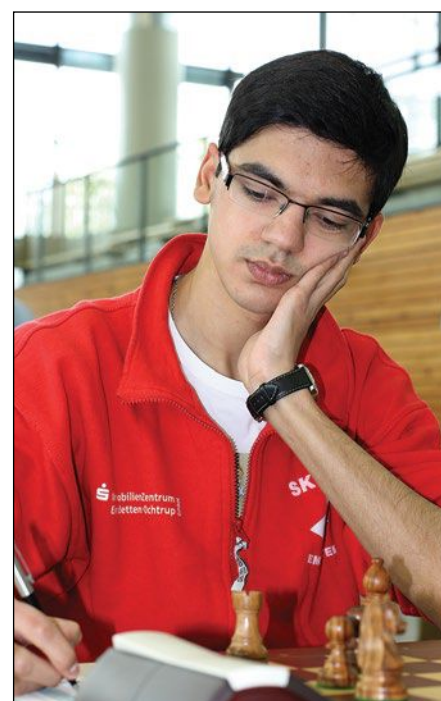
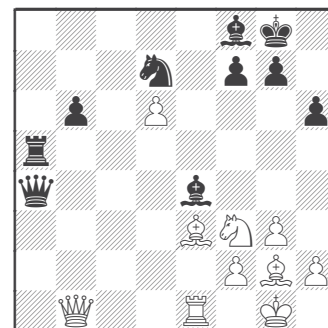
22...exd5 23.exd5



23...♗f8 23...♗c5! was ambitious but justified, I was more worried about defending the kingside than my b-pawn, but 24.♞f5 g6 25.♞h3 ♖f6, with the threats of ...♗c8 and ...♖g4, defends.

24.♗e3 24.♞f5 is still not impressive: 24...g6 25.♞h3 ♖f6.

24...♞a5 25.d6 ♗e4



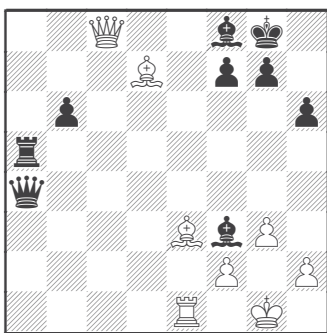
▲ Anish Giri.
Photo by Hartmut Metz.

26.♞c1? My opponent had been playing briskly for some time but this quick move oversteps the mark. 26.♞d1! ♞xd1 27.♞xd1 leaves a draw odds on after 27...♞d5 28.♞xd5 ♗xd5 29.♖e5 ♗e6 30.♖xd7 ♗xd7 31.♗xb6 ♗xd6.

26...♙xd6 26...♞d5 was another good option.

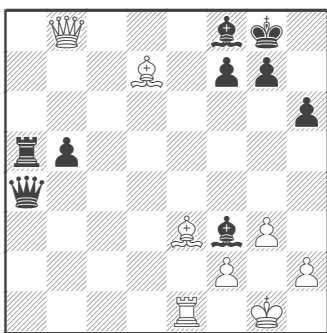
27.♞c8+ ♙f8 28.♙h3 ♙xf3 Now centralising the rook was more practical: 28...♞d5! 29.♙d2 ♙e5 repels the initiative.

29.♙xd7



29...b5? Now things started going wrong. I originally intended 29...♞b4! but suddenly noticed my resignation would be imminent after 30.♙d2? (In fact best is 30.♞c1! when 30...♞d6 consolidates the extra pawn) 30...♞xd2 31.♞xf8+. However this would only be the case if I replied 31...♙xf8?? allowing 32.♞e8 mate, whereas after 31...♙h7! 32.♞e8 ♙b7 it would be my opponent who had to resign.

30.♞b8! 30.♙c5? is met by 30...♞a8.



30...♞a8? The strongest move, 30...♞c2!, was hard to find. It is based on 31.♙xb5 ♞b2! 32.♞f4 ♞b4 winning material. 30...♙d5 was a good practical try since the natural 31.♙d2? loses to 31...♞a8 32.♞xb5 ♞d4 33.♙f4 ♙c4 34.♞c6 ♞a1. However 31.♙c1! ♞b4 32.♙d2 ♞xd2 33.♞xf8+ ♙h7 34.♙f5+ g6 35.♙xg6+ ♙xg6 36.♞g8+ leads to a perpetual check.

31.♞xb5

Draw

E95

Radoslaw Wojtaszek 2745

Baskaran Adhiban 2682

Sharjah Masters 2017

Annotated by GM Baskaran Adhiban

I had to win this game to keep alive my chances of fighting for the title and so found myself once again in the same predicament: How to fight against 1.d4? And how not to...

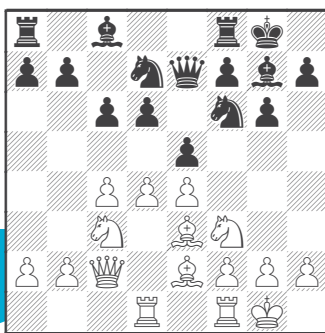
1.d4 d6 I decided to repeat the line which I used against Svane in the 6th round.

2.♙f3 ♙f6 3.c4 g6 4.♙c3 ♙g7 4...♙f5!? was my choice against Svane and I managed to win with a cool endgame display.

5.e4 0-0 6.♙e2 ♙bd7 After having my share of adventures with ...♙a6, I decided it was time for a change. And when you are at your lowest ebb, you are open to the greatest change!

7.0-0 e5 8.♙e3 Before the game I tried to find a promising continuation here, but didn't come up with anything in the limited time available and found myself jumping around various funky options. So it was time to sink into deep thought... Meanwhile Radek wasn't impressed because the last game he played in 2015 was in this very same line.

8...♞e7 9.♞c2 c6 10.♞ad1 After 10.d5 Black has two(!?) options: 10...♙g4!? 11.♙g5 f6 12.♙h4 c5 with a complex fight or 10...c5 11.♙e1 h5 Rapport style!



10...a6!? Radek was playing quickly and so it was time to start improvising. After 10...

exd4 11.♙xd4 ♞e8 12.f3 d5 13.cxd5 ♙xd5 14.♙xd5 cxd5 15.♙b5 was annoying, so my game move was directed against this.

11.♞fe1 11.d5 c5 Played in consideration of the fact that White has played ♞ad1 and now has to waste another tempo when he starts the queenside onslaught. Though 11...cxd5 12.cxd5 b5!? does seem like the logical continuation of ...a6 this is the KID, where play on the queenside is generally prohibited, apart from special cases such as that seen in M.Botvinnik – M.Tal, 6th game, World Championship 1960, where Black disobeyed that rule but after 13.a4 b4 14.♙a2 a5 had to face 15.♙d2 followed by penetration on the queenside.

11...exd4?! A lack of concentration, which leads to missing a key resource for my opponent. I should have continued the cat and mouse game with 11...h6!?. Radek mentioned 11...b5!? as an alternative, e.g. A) 12.cxb5 axb5 or B) 12.a3 ♙b7 13.cxb5 (13.d5 cxd5) 13...cxb5 14.d5 ♞fc8 with a decent game for Black. And if C) 12.d5 b4 13.♙a4 (If 13.dxc6 bxc3 14.cxd7 ♙b7! but not 14...♙xd7 15.b3! which is better for White.) 13...c5 14.a3 a5 and Black more or less keeps the queenside closed.

12.♙xd4 h6 Better late than never! I was principally fighting a battle against White's dark squared bishop. After 12...♞e8 13.♙g5! (13.f3 d5 14.cxd5 ♙xd5 15.♙xd5 cxd5 with a good game for Black.) 13...h6 14.♙h4 and White has stable control over the centre.

13.♙f1 13.♞d2! (13.f3 d5 14.cxd5 ♙xd5 is fine for Black.)



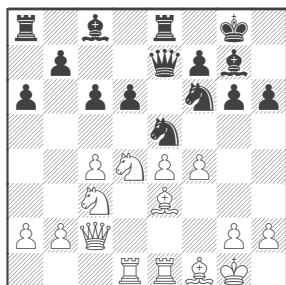
...looked like the critical try, when I was intending to continue with 13...h5!? but not A) 13...♙xe4 14.♙xe4 ♞xe4



15. ♖xh6 ♖xh6 (15... ♖h4 16. ♖xg7 ♖xg7 17. ♖f3 ♖f6 18. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 19. ♖xd6 a5) 16. ♖xh6 which is just better for White, as after 16... ♖e5 17. ♖f3 (rather than 17. ♖g4 ♖g7 18. ♖xg7+ ♖xg7) White will be at least a pawn up.

True, after **B)** 13...h5!?, 14. ♖g5 White is better but there is still a fully fledged battle in prospect. Similarly, after 14. ♖f3 ♖e8 followed by ...♖e5, Black can put up a fight despite his inferior position.

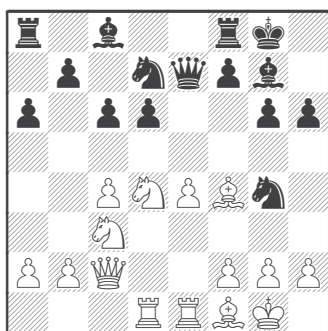
13... ♖g4 13... ♖e8 14.f3 ♖e5 15.f4



A) 15... ♖g4!? leads to exciting play: 16. ♖c1 ♖xh2 17. ♖xh2 ♖g4+ 18. ♖g3! and Black cannot obtain any compensation for the piece. But not 18. ♖g1 ♖xd4+! 19. ♖xd4 ♖h4 when Black wins because of the double attack on e1 and h2.

B) 15... ♖e7 16. ♖c1! with full control over the centre. But not 16.h3 ♖xe4 since White is not able to profit from the pin.

14. ♖f4



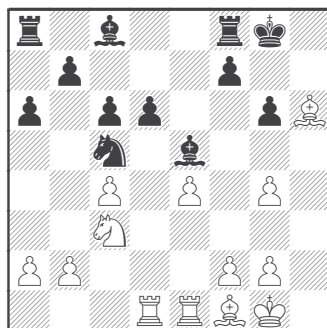
14... ♖c5 14... ♖e5 15. ♖d2 ♖h4 looked “!?” for a while until I saw that White can just play 16. ♖xe5 (16. ♖f3 ♖xf2+!) 16... dxe5 17. ♖f3 and totally humiliate Black.

15. ♖d2 15. ♖xc6 bxc6 16. ♖xd6 ♖a7 17. ♖xf8 ♖xf8 18.e5 ♖f5 looked fine for Black.

15... ♖f6 16.h3 16. ♖f3 ♖e5 17. ♖xe5 dxe5 18. ♖xh6 ♖e6 gives Black practical compensation for the pawn, but this was the line which Radek didn’t want to allow. Equally 16. ♖g3 h5 (16... ♖e5 17.f4 ♖ed3 18.e5 dxe5 19.fxe5 ♖d8 20. ♖xc6! bxc6 21. ♖xd3± with an extra pawn.) 17. ♖f3 ♖e5 18. ♖xd6 ♖xf3+ 19.gxf3 ♖e6 also offers Black compensation.

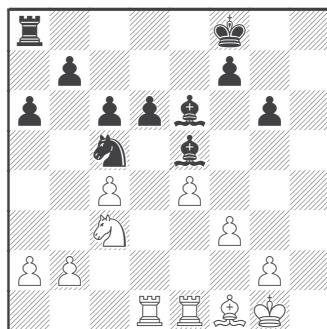
16... ♖xd4 17. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 18.hxg4 White’s best try was 18. ♖xd4 ♖e6 19. ♖xd6 ♖xf4 20.hxg4 ♖xg4 21.f3 ♖e6 and Black is clearly suffering in this endgame, e.g. 22.g3 ♖h5 23. ♖f2 g5!? (Fighting against f3-f4) 24. ♖a4 ♖ae8 25. ♖c5 with complete domination.

18... ♖e5 19. ♖xh6



19... ♖xg4!? This Petrosian-style sacrifice is the most tempting continuation and allows me to give up the exchange for two bishops and activity – an opportunity that doesn’t present itself too often. Also very interesting was 19... ♖e8!? 20.f3 ♖e6 with good compensation for the pawn, although after 21. ♖c1! (Radek’s intention) 21...b5 22. ♖d1 White still seems to stand better.

20.f3 ♖e6 21. ♖xf8 ♖xf8



This was the position I was aiming for.

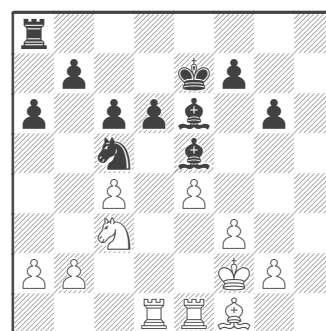


▲ Radoslaw Wojtaszek.
Photo by David Llada.

Black has fantastic compensation thanks to his strong bishops and firm control over the dark squares.

22. ♖f2 If White tries to radically prevent ...b5 by 22.a4 then I liked 22... a5!? in preparation for ...♖xc3, ...♖a4 or ...♖a6-b6.

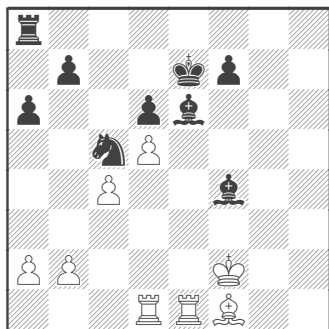
22... ♖e7?! It was possible to embark on 22...b5!? 23.g3 g5.



23.g3 A surprising shot which we both missed was 23. ♖d5+! cxd5 24.exd5± White carries out the same operation as he does in the game, but under far better circumstances!

23...g5 24.f4 Again 24. ♖d5+! was very strong.

24...gxf4 25.gxf4 ♙xf4 26.♖d5+ cxd5 27.exd5



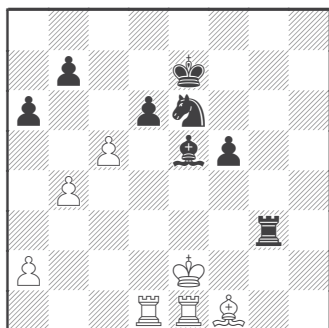
27...♙g8 27...♙g5 28.♔f3 ♙h4 29.♙e3! (29.♙e2 would allow a nice mating pattern after 29...♙g8 30.dxe6 ♙g3+ 31.♔f4 fxe6 threatening ...e5+ followed by ...♙g5 mate!) 29...♙g8 30.dxe6 fxe6 leads to an inferior version of the game.

28.♔f3 ♙e5 29.dxe6 f5! Creating an outpost on e4. 29...fxe6 should also provide sufficient compensation.

30.b4 ♙g3+ 30...♖e4 doesn't achieve anything after 31.♙d3! ♙g3+ 32.♔e2.

31.♔e2 ♖xe6 31...♖e4 32.♙d3 is nothing.

32.c5!?



After seeing this, I felt my chances were slim and so I decided to force a draw.

32...♖d4+ 32...♙a3!? 33.cxd6+ ♙xd6 was the way to go if Black wanted to continue the fight.

33.♔f2 ♙f3+ 34.♔g1 ♙g3+ 35.♔f2 ♙f3+ With this draw I tied for first but eventually finished in second place on tiebreak, with Wang Hao winning the event.

Draw ■

Showcasing American Chess At Its Finest

ONE MAN PARADE

by **GM Michael Rohde**

After a few years featuring less well-known but very strong European players, now the US Masters in picturesque **Greensboro, North Carolina**, is well-recognized to be one of the best choices for aspiring young Americans.

One

of the most adored tournaments in the country is the US Masters, which for the last several years has encompassed the weekend before Labor Day, but as a 5-day chess immersion event, at the Embassy Suites Hotel in

picturesque Greensboro, North Carolina. The US Masters is a notably very strong tournament because of the emphasis placed on building player relationships by organizers Dr. Walter High and Gary Newsom. When I played several years ago, amongst other strong opposition, I spent more than half the tournament battling against players who were regular competitors in the US Women's Championships. After a few days without gaining any traction, I began to look longingly at jumping into the concurrent North Carolina Open. Then I remembered that I had received a free airfare and free shared hotel room to play in the US Masters and so I snapped out of that reverie. Compared to past years, more North Carolinians are choosing to play in the US Masters rather than the NC Open, probably reflecting the increased chess strength in the state as a result of expanded activities at places such as the Charlotte Chess Center.



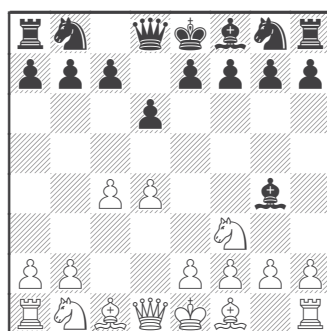
GM Timur Gareyev, the Blindfold King, evidently came to the US Masters to play in as determinedly an aggressive fashion as possible. Famous as an exercise-bike-riding giver of world-record blindfold simul, Gareyev, in Greensboro, had to settle for expressing himself through launching his kingside pawns forward whenever possible. In his game against IM Venkat Saravanan of India, Gareyev tried this as Black in an Old Indian type of position. Much like the protagonist in the James Taylor song "One Man Parade" – a free spirit roaming against the backdrop of the serene Piedmont countryside – Gareyev was here to make some noise. But things got messy when Saravanan threw everything right back at him, including the proverbial kitchen sink.

A53

Venkat Saravanan	2320
Timur Gareyev	2620

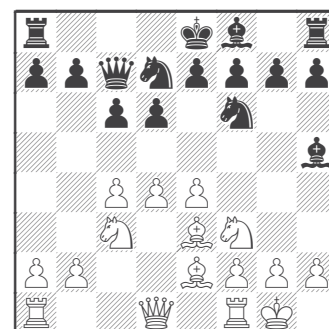
US Masters, Greensboro 2017

1.♟f3 d6 2.d4 ♟g4 3.c4 Here the most theoretical move is 3...♟d7. Then after 4.♞b3 ♞b8 5.♟c3 ♟gf6, an interesting idea is the "double-parking" move 6.♟e3. The idea is that if Black does not release the jam-up with 6...♟xf3 allowing 7.exf3, White will follow up with 7.♟f3-d2, planning f2-f3 and ♟e3-f2.



3...c6 4.♟c3 ♟f6 5.e4 ♟bd7 6.♟e2 ♟h5 It looked like we had stabilized into some version of the Old Indian, but this mysterious bishop move presages Black's unusual plan. 6...e5 and 6...g6 would have been within the range of normality.

7.0-0 ♞c7 8.♟e3



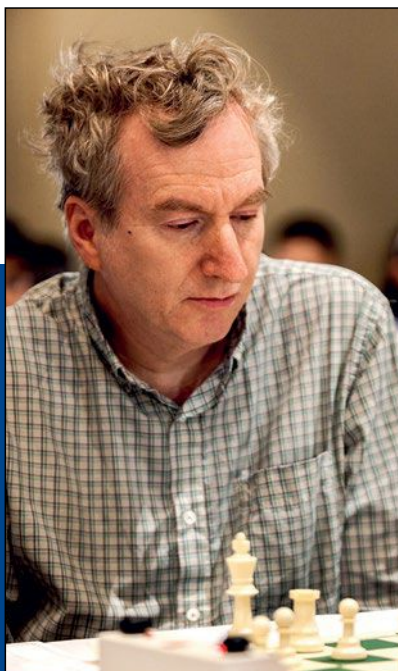
8...♞g8 The point of no return, as now Black cannot castle kingside. Instead, 8...♟g4 would be pointless after 9.♟f4 (or 9. ♟d2). The quixotic text takes direct aim at White's king, but seemingly from an out-of-range location.

9.♞c1 h6 10.b4 g5 11.c5 Saravanan is determined to make the queenside the main theater of operations. 11.d5 was possible, but less instinctive due to giving up the square e5. Gareyev would probably make an issue of that with 11...♟xf3 12.♟xf3 ♟e5, although White would still be better due to Black having voluntarily forfeited the right to castle kingside.

11...dxc5 11...g4 12.cxd6 exd6 13.♟h4 is positionally overwhelming.

12.bxc5 ♟xf3 12...e5 leads to problems because after 13.♟xe5 ♟xe2 14.♞xe2 ♟xe3 15.dxe5 ♞xe5 16.♞fd1 Black cannot castle. Then 16...♞d8 17.♞xd8+ ♟xd8 18.♟d4 and the removal of the queen from e5 spells trouble.

13.♟xf3 e5 13...g4 14.♟e2 e5 15.d5 (15.♟c4 exd4 16.♟xd4 ♞g5 is a nice resource to get a measure of control over the squares e5 and c5.) 15...♟xc5 16.♞d2 effectively puts Black under pressure on both wings, even though the threats do not appear that imminent.

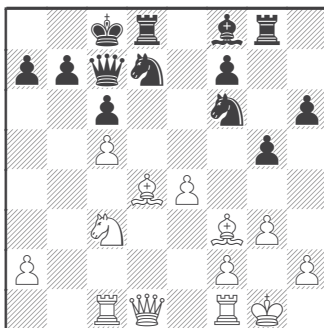


Grandmaster **Michael Rohde**, a Brilliancy Prize winner at the 1986, 1987 and 1988 US Championships, US Open Champ in 1991 (and equal first in 2007), wrote a popular "Game of the Month" column in *Chess Life* from 1991-2001 and is author of *Play the Sveshnikov* and *The Great Evans Gambit Debate*.

14.g3 Saravanan calmly ensures that the light-squared bishop will get to stay on the long diagonal. 14.♖a4 was the most incisive, impacting Black's ability to get castled on the queenside. 14...exd4 15.♗xd4 ♗xc5 would be mistaken because of 16.♘d5.

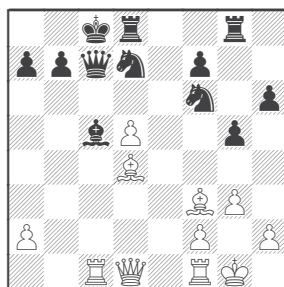
14...exd4 15.♗xd4 0-0-0 15...♗xc5 16.e5 (16.♗xf6 is not so clear after 16...♘f6 17.e5 ♘d7 18.e6 fxe6 19.♗h5+ ♖e7 20.♘e4 ♗b6 21.♖f3 ♗af8 22.♖a3+

♘d8 and the king keeps crawling toward refuge on b8.) 16...♗xd4 17.♖xd4 (17.♘b5 is also possible; then 17...♖xe5 18.♗e1 ♖f8 19.♗xe5 ♗xe5 20.♘d4 and White retains an advantage.) 17...♘xe5 18.♗fe1 ♘fd7 19.♘b5 ♖f8 (19...0-0-0 loses prettily to 20.♗g4 as Black's counterplay against the f3 square is eliminated and meanwhile the pin on the d7 knight means the e5 knight is toast.) 20.♗h5 and White still has the edge with persistent threats now resulting from his knight's relocation to f5.



16.♘d5 Effective, but also the only way to continue the attack. Otherwise, Black's counterplay on the d-file and grip on the central dark squares have become sufficient.

16...cxd5 17.c6 17.exd5 ♗xc5

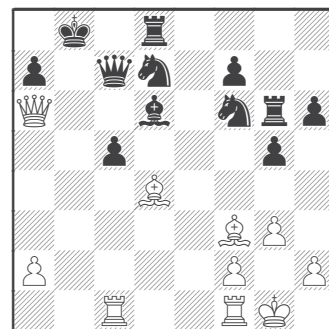


A) 18.♗xc5 is not good enough and Black takes over after 18...♘xc5 19.♖d4 ♘fd7 20.d6 (20.♗g4 b6) 20...♖a5; **B) 18.♗xc5 ♘xc5 19.♗xf6 ♖b8** is a position Black can live with, although only White can seek the initiative.

17...bxc6 18.exd5 c5 19.♖a4 ♗g6 19...♗d6 escapes to an unpleasant endgame after 20.♖b1 ♘b6 (20...♗de8 21.♖a6+ ♖d8 22.♗xf6+ ♘xf6 23.♖b7 is winning) 21.♖a6+ ♖b7 22.♖xb7+ ♖xb7 23.♗xf6.

20.d6 ♗xd6 20...♖xd6 is the correct, and a surprisingly resilient, defense, although White can keep some pressure with 21.♗fd1 (21.♖xa7 ♘d5 and White has to settle for a draw after 22.♖a8+ ♖c7 23.♖a7+ ♖c8) 21...♘d5 22.♗e3 ♖a6 23.♖xa6+ ♗xa6 24.♗xd5.

21.♖a6+ ♖b8

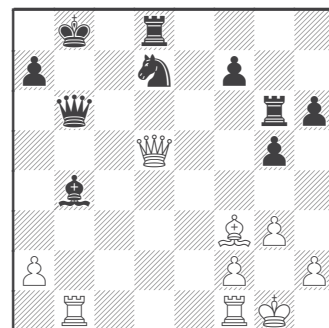


22.♗xc5 Spectacularly clearing away all the brushwood to land a crusher on b7. Now if 22...♗xc5 23.♗xc5 accomplishes that goal.

22...♘d5 The knight just floats into the middle, also enabling the rook on g6 to join in the attempt to block the b-file on b6.

23.♖b5+ ♘5b6 24.♗xb6 ♖xb6 25.♖d5 A new tack arises in delivering a crusher on the light squares. Now Black will have to desperately figure out a way to block both the b- and c-files.

25...♗c5 26.♖b1 ♗b4



27.♗fc1 27.♖xb4 would have been the beautiful conclusion to White's attack. Then 27...♖xb4 28.♖c1 and there is no way out.

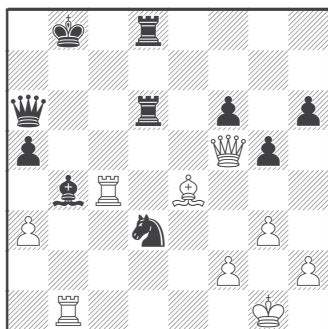
27...♘c5 Tempo-ing on the queen, Black gets another life!



28. ♖e5+ ♜g6 29. ♜c4 f6 29... ♜d3 was also possible with similar variations in the event of ♖e5-e4, but Gareyev rightly figured it to be a slight improvement with the black pawn on f6.

30. ♖f5 ♜d3 31. ♜e4 Saravanan is still looking for the win that escaped. More reliable was 31. ♖e4 ♜d5 (31... ♜c5 is not the right way because 32. ♜xc5 ♜xc5 33. ♜xb6+ ♜xb6 34. ♖a8+ ♜c7 35. ♖xa7+ is better for White.) 32. ♜cxb4 ♜xb4 33. ♜xb4 ♜b5 34. ♜c4 ♜bd5 (34... ♖b7 is also equal) 35. ♜b4 with a repetition.

31...a5 32.a3 ♖a6



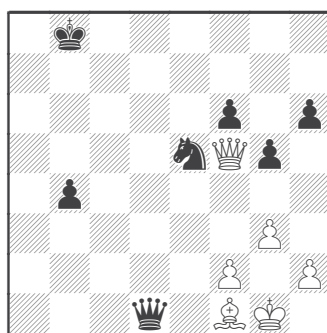
Now Black can finally start flexing some muscles!

33. ♜c2 ♜e5 33... ♜f4 is amusing but does not work after 34. gxf4 ♜d1+ 35. ♜xd1 ♜xd1+ 36. ♜g2 g4 37. ♜g3.

34. ♜cc1 ♜d4 34... ♖e2 is an attempt to mix things up after 35. axb4 a4 with a very unclear situation with chances for both sides.

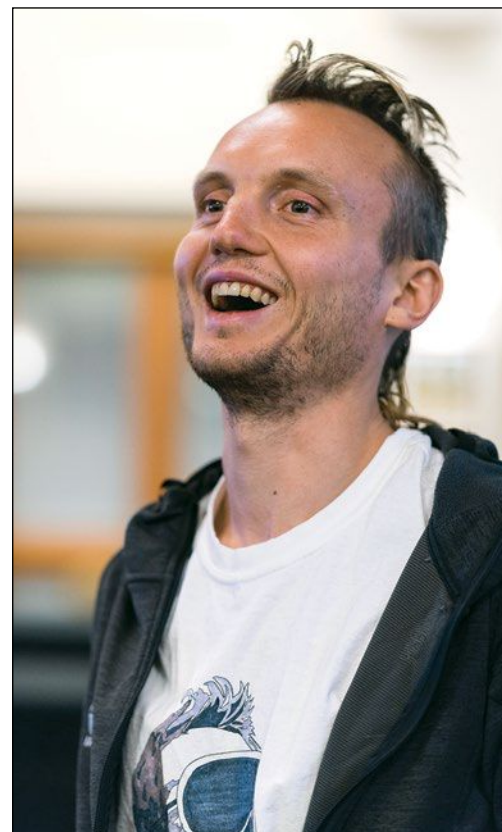
35. ♜g2 ♖e2 now this move bails out into equality.

36. axb4 ♜d1+ 37. ♜xd1 ♜xd1+ 38. ♜xd1 ♖xd1+ 39. ♜f1 axb4



40. ♖xf6 ♜f3+ 41. ♜g2 ♜e1+ 42. ♜g1 ♜f3+ 43. ♜g2 ♜e1+

Draw ■



Timur Gareyev. ▲
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

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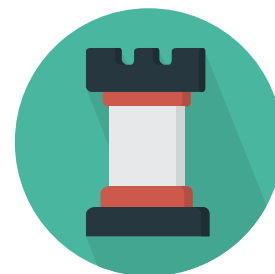
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Mating Motifs in the Endgame

by **GM Alex Fishbein**

In the endgame, you usually focus on advancing and queening your pawns. You rarely think about checkmate when the queens are no longer on the board. But checkmate is after all the ultimate aim in chess. Let us explore some recurring mating motifs in the endgame.



MATING MOTIF #1:

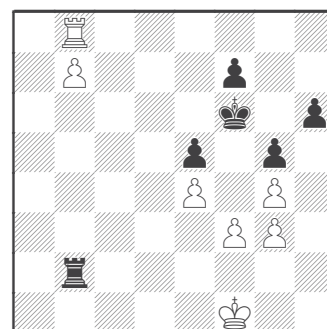
The pawn as a decoy in a mating net.

Next we see a young (but already 2700-rated) Magnus Carlsen put this idea to work.

Magnus Carlsen	2698
Zbynek Hracek	2614

Bundesliga, Germany 2007

The white rook is stuck in front of the pawn.

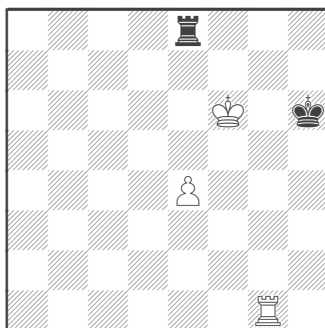


49...♖b1+? Hracek does not see how White will get the rook out. But there is a way! The only defense was **49...♔g7. 50.♕e2 ♖b2+ 51.♔d3 ♖b3+ 52.♕c4**

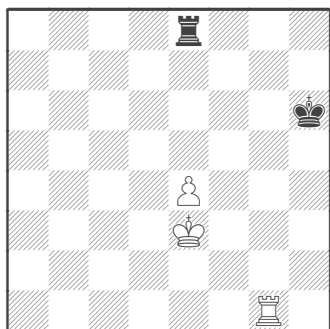
We

begin with an example from the theory of rook endings:

6.♔d6 ♖a8 7.e5 ♖a6+ is a draw. 1...♗f8+ 2.♔e5 ♗e8+ 3.♔f6!



Mate in a rook ending



1.♔f4 Although the black king is cut off two files from the pawn, the normal winning method does not work because the black rook has enough distance to the side of the pawn: **1.♔d4 ♖d8+ 2.♔c5 ♖e8 3.♔d5 ♖d8+ 4.♔c6 ♖e8 5.♖e1 ♔g6**

Simple but thematic. Black does not have time to capture the pawn because of mate. The pawn advances to the fifth rank, after which the rook does not have enough checking distance in front of the pawn.

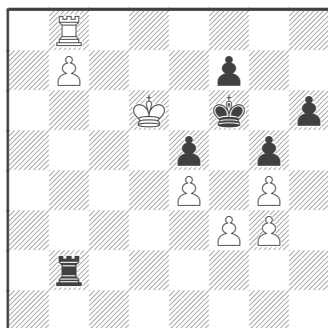
3...♗f8+ 4.♔e7 ♗f3 5.e5 and White wins easily.

This was a basic example of our first mating motif:

53.♖c5 ♖c1+ 54.♖d6 ♖d1+ 55.♖c6 ♖c1+ 56.♖d7 ♖b1 The standard drawing procedure: White's king is not defending the pawn, so Black puts the rook back behind it. What can White do?

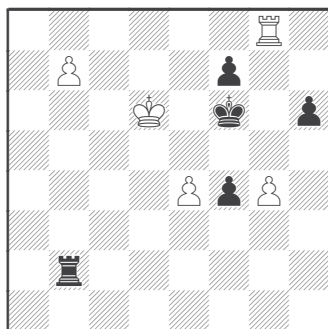
57.♗e8! Okay, Magnus has an idea: penetrate behind with ♗f8 and ♖c8 followed by ♖c6 mate. But Black does not have to let the king in.

57...♗g7 58.♗e7 ♖b2 59.♖d6 ♗f6



So, now what? If 60.♖c7 ♖c2+ and he keeps checking. But now the future world champion demonstrates the full beauty of his idea:

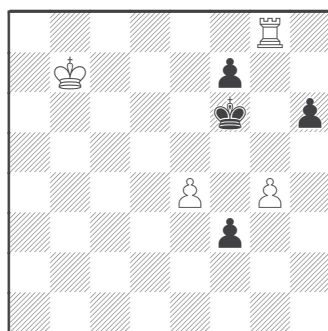
60.f4! exf4 61.gxf4 gxf4 62.♖g8!!



62...♖b6+ Black cannot take the pawn: 62...♖xb7 63.e5 mate.

Therefore, he must give up the rook for the pawn.

63.♖c7 ♖xb7+ 64.♖xb7 f3



65.♖c6 Not the only way to win, but the prettiest: the black pawn cannot advance because of the same mate.

65...♗e5 65...f2 66.♖d6 f1♖ 67.e5 mate.

66.♖e8+ ♗f4 67.♖d5 f6 68.♖f8

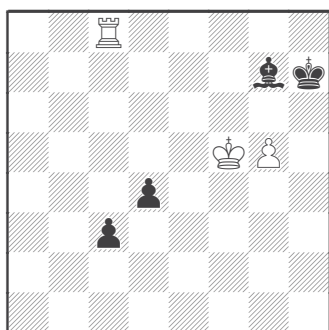
Black resigned

We are not discussing mating patterns with two rooks here: they are too obvious. But checkmate ideas with just one rook are also important to be aware of.

Mikhail Botvinnik

Coen Zuidema

IBM, Amsterdam 1966

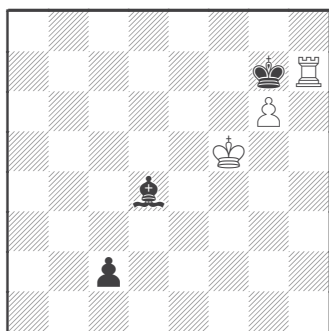


52.♖e8! d3 52...♗h8 loses to 53.g6+ ♗g7 54.♖c8, zugzwang.

53.g6+ ♗h6 54.♖e3 It is well known that a rook by itself cannot stop two pawns on the sixth rank. But if a rook can threaten mate, that is a game changer.

54...♗d4 54...♗e5 55.♖xe5 (55.♖xd3 also wins: 55...c2 56.♖d7! threatens mate again, and 56...♗g7 57.♖c7 is the end.) 55...♗g7 (55...d2 56.♖e7 d1♖ 57.♖h7 mate) 56.♖e7+ ♗g8 57.♗f6 also leads to checkmate.

55.♖xd3 c2 56.♖h3+ ♗g7 57.♖h7+



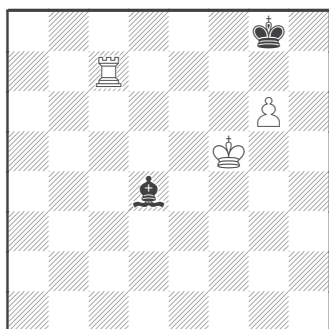
Botvinnik writes: "Black resigned (he loses the c2-pawn). But about a half-hour later



Alex Fishbein is an American grandmaster, residing in New Jersey. He was the winner of the inaugural Denker Tournament of High School Champions in 1985. He won several national and international tournaments in the 1990s, including in Denmark and Norway, and became a grandmaster in 1992. He then began a career in finance but continued to compete in his spare time, including four times in the U.S. Championship in the 2000s. He is known for his endgame knowledge, having won the Best Endgame Prize in the 2004 U.S. Championship and written a well-received book on pawn endings in 1993.

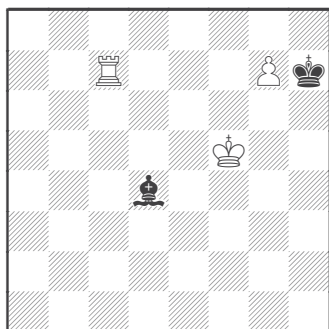
someone suggested that the endgame with the pawn on g6 is drawn. I only replied that I had seen how Smyslov beat Simagin in such an ending. A bit more time passed, and everyone calmed down. The winning method was found in an endgame manual.” For a long time, I considered this comment to be quite strange: how is it possible that Botvinnik did not know how to win this position and needed a reference manual to remind himself (and then did not even explain the method in his notes)? But now I am inclined to think that this is an example of Botvinnik’s subtle sense of humor. To him, the win here was obvious, and he left it as an exercise for the reader. Let’s solve the exercise, as it is very instructive:

57...♔g8 58.♖c7 c1♙ 59.♖xc1 ♔g7 60.♖c7+ ♔g8



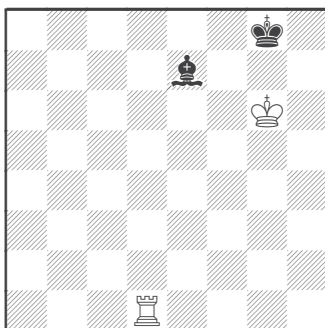
So, how does White win? If 61.♔g5 ♕e3+ and White is not making any progress.

61.g7! The white king and rook will weave a mating net, and the pawn is just in the way. **61...♔h7 61...♕xg7 62.♔g6** ends the game immediately.



62.♖f7! If the king is confined to the corner of the color of the bishop, the rook vs bishop (without pawns) is a win. But it is worth remembering how: **62...♕c5 63.g8♙+ ♔xg8 64.♔g6**

♕g1 65.♖f1 ♕h2 66.♖h1 ♕g3 67.♖g1 ♕d6 If 67...♕f4, then 68.♖f5+. **68.♖d1 ♕e7**



69.♖a1! 1-0 Demise on the back rank cannot be avoided.

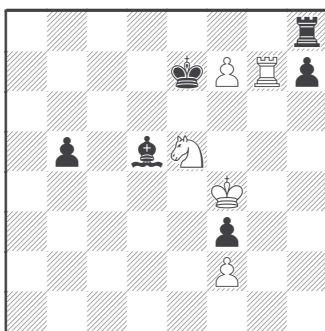
Here we saw another important theme:

MATING MOTIF #2: Clearance sacrifice.

Let’s look at an example from one of the earlier games of another great endgame master:

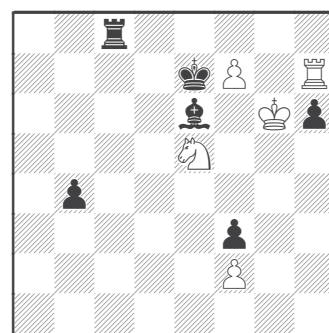
Emanuel Lasker
Emanuel Schiffers

Nuremberg, 1896



Lasker began this endgame down two pawns, but now he has some practical winning chances with his pawn on f7. Still, the position is very much within the drawing zone.

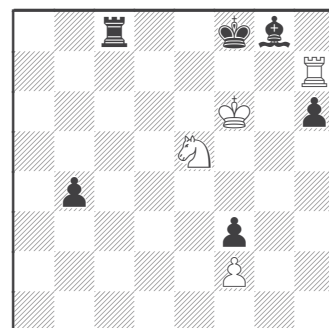
39.♔g5 h6+ 40.♔f5 ♕e6+ 41.♔g6 ♖c8 42.♖h7 b4?! 42...♖f8 is the cleanest way to draw, but Black does not sense the danger.



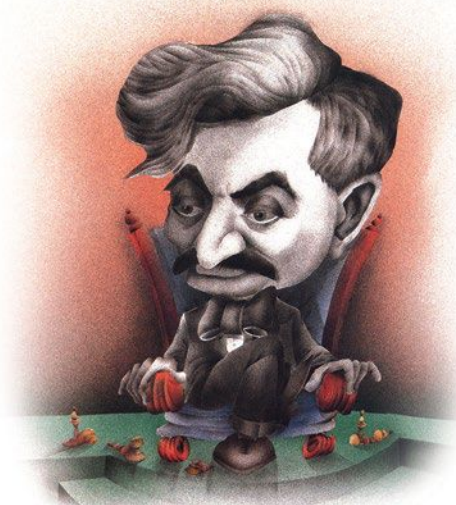
43.f8♙+! A typical sacrifice, clearing the way for a mating net.

43...♔xf8 44.♔f6

44...♕g8? A natural reaction, closing the back rank, but the mate will come from another place. It was already difficult to find a defense: 44...♔g8 45.♖g7+ ♔f8 46.♔g6+ ♔e8 47.♔xe6 ♖c6+ 48.♔e5 is problematical for Black; 44...♖c2! is the right way: 45.♔xe6 ♔g8! (45...♖xf2? 46.♔d7+ with mate) 46.♖f7 ♖xf2, and Black will be able to hold this.

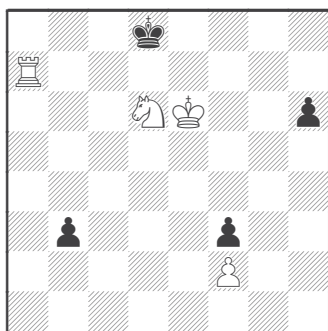


Emanuel Lasker.
Caricature by Jovan Prokopljevic.



45.♖e7! The only winning move: White threatens mate with the knight from two squares, d7 and g6. Black has no hope now.

45...♗h7 46.♖xh7 ♔g8 47.♖g7+ ♔f8 48.♖b7 ♖a8 49.♖f7+ ♔e8 50.♖e7+ ♔d8 51.♗f7+ ♔c8 52.♗d6+ ♔d8 53.♔e6 ♖a7 54.♖xa7 b3



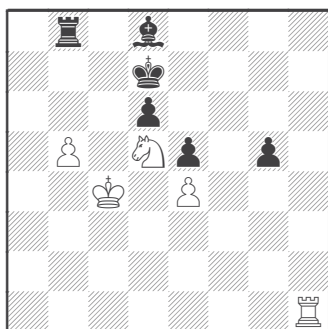
55.♖a8+ This is how the game ends in the database, but 55.♖d7 mate seems more likely.

Black resigned

Lasker showed in the previous example that the rook and knight are a powerful attacking duo. This is still true 120 years later, as the 15th world champion illustrates:

Vishy Anand	2796
Veselin Topalov	2803

London Classic 2015

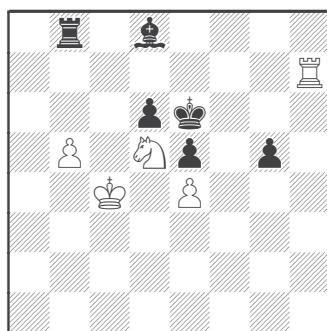


48.♖h7+ ♔e6? There is a natural tendency in the endgame to move the king toward the center. However, when pawns take away key escape squares, the king can be just as vulnerable in the center in the endgame as it is in the middlegame.

This brings us to our third mating motif:

MATING MOTIF #3: The king is in the center and is near blocked pawns.

White's pawn on e4 controls two escape squares (d5 and f5), and the pawns on e5 and d6 occupy two others. Black's king is in a mating net. Topalov had to try 48...♔c8!, with drawing chances.

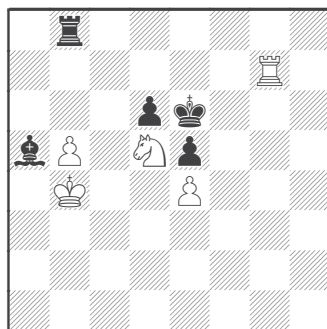


49.♔b4! Anand creates a zugzwang in a position where he is a pawn down. Black cannot move the rook because of b5-b6, cannot play ...♗b6 because of ♖e7 mate, or ...♗f6 because of ♖h6. He must move the g-pawn, which will then be captured.

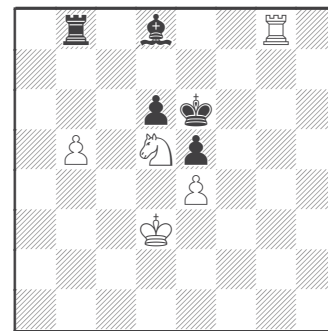
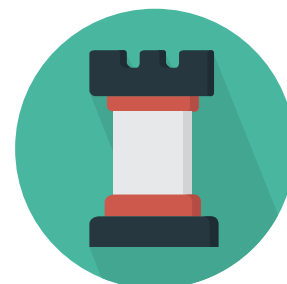
49...g4 50.♖g7 g3 51.♖xg3 ♖b7 52.♖g6+ ♔d7 53.♖g7+ ♔c8 54.♖g8 ♔d7 55.♔c4 ♖b8 56.♖g7+ ♔e6 56...♔c8 57.♗e7+ ♗xe7 58.♖xe7 ♖b6 59.♔b4 is hopeless for Black.

57.♔b4! The same zugzwang as on move 49.

57...♗a5+ A good stalemate trick.

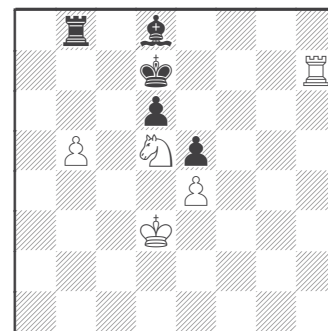


58.♔c4 Anand must have had almost no time left, because he can win immediately with 58.♔a4! (even taking the bishop wins: with some care, White can avoid stalemate) 58...♗d8 59.♖a7! ♖c8 60.b6. 58...♗d8 59.♖g8 ♖c8+ 60.♔d3 ♖b8



61.♖h8? Letting Black back in the game. 61.♔c4, returning to the previous plan, was correct.

61...♔d7 62.♖h7+



62...♔e6? 62...♔c8! and Black can fight on.

63.♔c4! ♖c8+ 64.♔b4 Back on the right track.

64...♖c1 65.b6 ♖b1+ 66.♔a5 ♗xb6+ There is no chance here for Black: the pawn is ready to promote.

67.♗xb6 ♖a1+ 68.♔b5 ♖b1+ 69.♔c6 ♖c1+ 70.♔b7 ♖b1 71.♔c7 ♖c1+ 72.♔d8 ♖e1 73.♖h4 ♔f6 74.♖g4

Black resigned

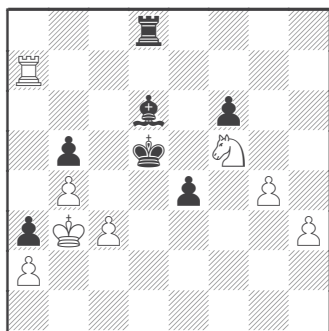
It is surprising that Black walked his own king into a mating net not once but twice, but it seems that people are very reluctant to keep their king on the edge of the board when facing a rook and knight.

Let's look at two more examples of the king getting mated near the center of the board, each time with no air because of blocked pawns nearby.

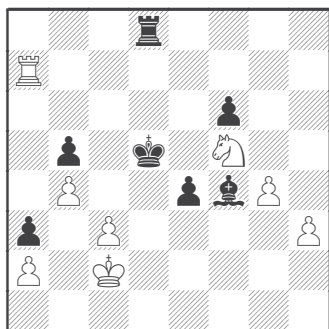
Anatoly Karpov	2690
Vladimir Liberzon	2550

Bad Lauterberg, 1977

This was an interesting endgame, but it had no chance of being included in Anatoly Karpov's game collection because his opponent, Vladimir Liberzon, had emigrated to Israel. He was in the world's top 50 at this time, but an unpersn in the Soviet Union.

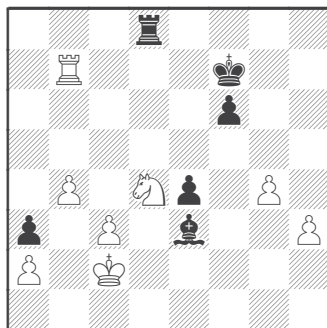


47...♙f4? An inaccuracy based on an underestimation of the danger to his king in the center. Correct was 47...♙e5! and if 48.♙c2 (48.♙a6 e3! 49.♙xe3+ ♙e4 50.♙f5 ♙d3 generates counterplay) 48...♙c6! 49.♙a6+ ♙b7! (getting out of the minefield; not 49...♙d5?? 50.♙e7 mate) 50.♙xa3 ♙d3 51.h4 ♙f4 52.♙a5 ♙d2+ 53.♙b3 e3 and the pawn will cost White a piece, after which it looks like Black will survive.
48.♙c2!



Black's king is in the way of the rook on d8. Where should it go?
48...♙c4? Not here! The only chance was 48...♙e5 49.♙b7 ♙d2+ 50.♙b3 ♙h2

51.♙xb5+ ♙f4 52.♙b6, and compared to the previous variation, White's rook is much more active, and he has very good winning chances, although the situation is not completely clear yet.
49.♙c7+! Karpov was as good as anyone at mating tricks in the endgame.
49...♙d5 49...♙xc7 50.♙e3 is mate in the middle of the board. Therefore, the king must go back, but this loss of time leads to a very quick loss of the game.
50.♙c5+ ♙e6 51.♙d4+ ♙f7 52.♙xb5 ♙e3 53.♙b7+



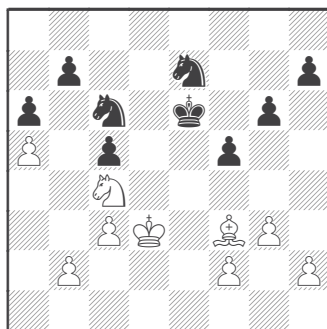
53...♙g8 53...♙g6 54.♙f5 and mate awaits here too!
54.♙f5 ♙d2+ 55.♙b3

Black resigned

Allow me to conclude with one of my own games, and a brief glimpse into the psychology of mating attacks in the endgame.

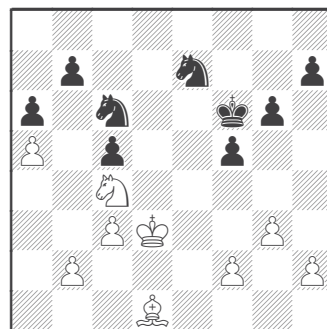
Alex Fishbein	2564
Firuza Velikhanli	2320

National Chess Congress, Philadelphia 2013



38.♙d1 My opponent, a WGM from Azerbaijan, was in severe time trouble here, with about a minute left for three moves. White has the advantage, but this

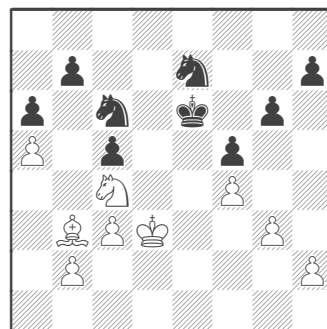
position cannot be won by normal means. I found a nasty checkmate trap here, based on the familiar theme of the king's movement being restricted by blocked pawns. Once I found it, I played my moves very quickly, and tried to show an expression that I was expecting the black king to just go back and forth.
38...♙f6



39.f4 Preparing the trap! With the e5, f5, and g5 squares all out of the black king's reach, a mate is in the air.

39...♙e6 Black is just trying to make move 40.

40.♙b3!



40...♙f6?? The fatal mistake. After 40...♙d7, Black should be able to hold. Of course, if she had time to think, she would never have fallen for this trap.

41.♙d6! g5 41...♙xa5 42.♙e8 is mate, so Black must lose the b7-pawn.

42.♙xb7 gxf4 43.gxf4 ♙g6 44.♙e3 ♙ge7 45.♙c4

Black resigned

Our journey through the land of endgame checkmates has come to a close, but of course there are many more mating themes that we have not covered here. Always remember that a threat of mate takes precedence over any other threat, even in the endgame.

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5

from the BOOKSHELF

by **FM Carsten Hansen**



Carsten Hansen is a FIDE Master and chess enthusiast residing in Bayonne, New Jersey. He has written twelve books, mostly on openings, the most recent *The Sicilian Dragon – move by move* (Everyman Chess 2016). From 2000 to 2014, he wrote the book review column, Checkpoint at chesscafe.com. You can find his blog on all areas of chess at carstenchess.com.

10 NOTEWORTHY BOOKS



- 01 **Great Moves: Learning Chess Through History**  ★★★★★
by Sunil Weeramantry, Alan Abrams & Robert McLellan (Mongoose Press 2017)
- 02 **Timman's Titans** by Jan Timman  ★★★★★
(New In Chess 2017)
- 03 **The Chess Attacker's Handbook**  ★★★★★
by Michael Song & Razvan Preotu (Gambit Publications 2017)
- 04 **First Steps: Fundamental Endings** by Cyrus Lakdawala  ★★★★★
(Everyman Chess 2017)
- 05 **Together with Morozevich** by Alexey Kuzmin  ★★★★★
(Thinkers Publishing 2017)
- 06 **The King's Indian Defence – Move by Move** by Sam Collins  ★★★★★
(Everyman Chess 2017)
- 07 **Extreme Chess Tactics** by Yochanan Afek  ★★★★★
(Gambit Publications 2017)
- 08 **Strike first with the Scandinavian (DVD-ROM/download)**  ★★★★★
by Christian Bauer (ChessBase GmbH 2017)
- 09 **Master Class Vol. 8 (DVD-ROM/download)**  ★★★★★
by Dr. Karsten Mueller, Mihail Marin, Oliver Reeh, Niclas Huschenbeth
(ChessBase GmbH 2017)
- 10 **The Complete French Advance**  ★★★★★
by Evgeny Sveshnikov & Vladimir Sveshnikov (New In Chess 2017)



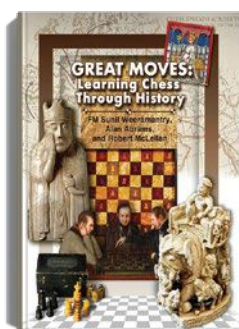
This

time around, I have an exciting batch of new books, which should appeal both to the happy amateur, seeking entertainment and instruction, as well as more ambitious players who want to improve their understanding and skill in different departments of the game.

01 Great Moves: Learning Chess Through History

by Sunil Weeramantry, Alan Abrams & Robert McLellan

MSRP \$ 29.95



This publication has the look and feel of a school text book: it is beautifully produced in full color, with wonderful illustrations, larger than usual font and with generous white

space giving air to the pages.

It is clearly designed to familiarize students with all things classical, e.g., ideas, mates, games, endgames, studies, etc., because the most recent examples are from Morphy's games – so that's more than 150 years ago! But there are also explanations of tactical and other themes, such as removing the guard, pins, skewers, etc.

As a book designed for the purpose of teaching beginners, this is an excellent introduction to the game, its origins, its first great players and its most important elements. Inside there is a note to teachers and parents recommending that students read up to 5th grade level at least, which seems very reasonable because otherwise the interesting historical tidbits would be lost on most of the younger or less experienced readers.

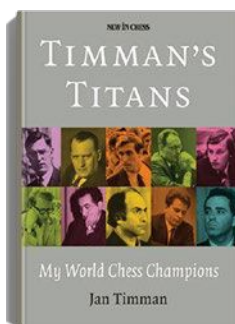
There is also a reference to a website www.greatmoveschess.org. Although that page is not yet in operation, its intention will be to advise on the planning of lessons and provision of additional resources.

Overall, this is a good book for instructional purposes.

02 Timman's Titans

by Jan Timman

MSRP \$ 29.95



This was recently adjudged the English Chess Federation's Book of The Year and I wholeheartedly agree with this decision. It is a phenomenal work in which

Timman has many stories to tell about ten world champions: Alekhine, Euwe, Botvinnik, Smyslov, Tal, Petrosian, Spassky, Fischer, Karpov and Kasparov, all of whom he has met in person, apart from Alekhine who died before Timman was born. However he does narrate how he managed to acquire one of the last chess sets belonging to Alekhine, while he was exiled in Portugal.

After each of the fascinating narratives Timman presents interesting games played by the world champions. Some of these are analyzed in detail, others somewhat lighter in terms of variations and notes but all very interesting. The games sections can be split into two: games vs. Timman and games vs. other players. Those that were not played against the author are chosen because they contain something of particular interest, a noteworthy idea, a good story, an instructive lesson or an original feature. The games against the author are especially noteworthy because of the personal element and the author is not afraid to explain why he took a quick draw or admit he made a poor opening choice or if there were other factors that played an influential role

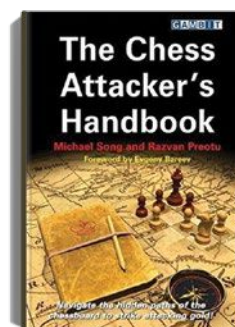
in the course of the game.

This is a very enjoyable book which I know I will return to again and again, as it is one of my favorite publications of 2017.

03 The Chess Attacker's Handbook

by Michael Song & Razvan Preotu

MSRP \$ 21.95



This book is authored by a couple of very talented Canadian players, one a grandmaster at only 17 years of age and the other an international master at 18

– therefore much younger than your average debut author. However, this has not prevented them from putting together an amazing book on attacking chess. Each chapter has a separate theme, such as the attacking the uncastled king, attack in the endgame, attacking when there are opposite colored bishops, etc. Each topic is covered in depth with well-chosen examples, some familiar to me, but many not, including several positions from the authors' own games. Each chapter concludes with a series of six to eight test positions with deeply annotated solutions.

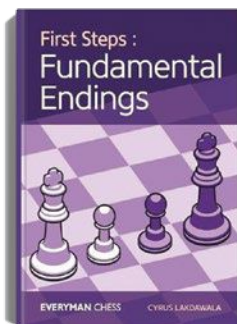
While the book isn't as profound as Aagaard's two-volume work on attacking chess, it is the perfect place to start for those who are not sufficiently well versed to benefit from more advanced works. In fact it is instructive and challenging enough to be of value to those rated up to around 2200 Elo and maybe even higher.

This enterprising work was the greatest positive surprise of the whole batch I received this time around and I hope it will find a broad audience.

04 First Steps: Fundamental Endings

by Cyrus Lakdawala

MSRP \$ 24.95



First Steps is the most recent series from Everyman Chess and is aimed at replacing the Starting Out volumes which are either out of print or have become dated

in terms of opening theory. As far as I can recall, there was no single-volume coverage of endgames in the Starting Out series but rather separate books on the different types of endings. As in the case of Everyman's other prominent series, Move by Move, the Californian International Master, Cyrus Lakdawala, has embraced the format with several books already to his credit.

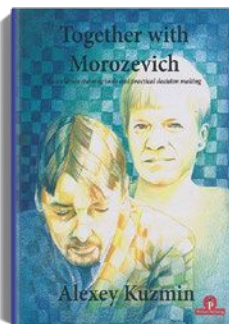
Lakdawala has been criticized for his jocular style which, though enjoyable, sometimes results in curtailing or even dismissing certain lines of play. This book has quite a different approach and in fact I found myself actually missing his jokes, which here have been replaced with a pretty thorough presentation of all types of endings, from the simple and essential to those that are more complex. However, I would have preferred more explanation in certain endgames, in order to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the concepts behind the moves rather than just delivering the correct line of play and supporting analysis.

Nevertheless this is a good place for seriously minded young or novice players to start their journey on the road to endgame mastery.

05 Together with Morozevich

by Alexey Kuzmin

MSRP \$ 32.95



This stands apart from almost any other chess book I have seen in the last few years, but that seems to be the norm for Thinkers Publishing which is producing material that is so very different

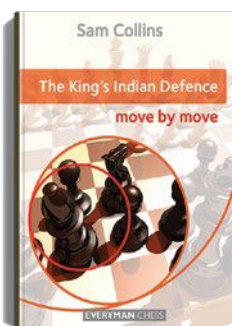
from that of the major publishers. As the title suggests, it contains creative work generated by Kuzmin's collaboration with Morozevich and this is indeed partly the case. Nowadays Kuzmin is mostly known for his column in New In Chess Yearbook and less so as a grandmaster who previously assisted Karpov with his opening preparation.

Here Kuzmin presents a variety of puzzles and exercises derived from Morozevich's games. These are grouped thematically and are of different levels of complexity. The solutions are then given together with the moves of the whole game, which is also analyzed in detail. The result is a stimulating work which will provide a source of training material for serious and ambitious players as well as their coaches.

06 The King's Indian Defence - Move by Move

by Sam Collins

MSRP \$ 24.95



Irish International Master Sam Collins is an experienced author with a catalogue of other titles to his credit. Here he deals with the massive subject of the

King's Indian Defense, which I'm surprised hasn't been covered before in this long-running series.

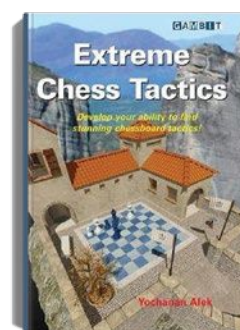
Unlike several other titles in this list, my own books on the Dragon and the Closed Sicilian included, Collins has chosen to focus on a tight repertoire for Black. This policy has of course impacted on the size of the book and left it considerably shorter than most other titles in the series. While the material is interesting and relevant, it does trim the material to the bone, thereby limiting the coverage of the lines under discussion. This means that those seeking to gain a greater understanding of the opening as a whole will have to look elsewhere because many major sub-variations are not even mentioned.

Nevertheless this book may well serve the purposes of those looking for a compact and clearly defined repertoire.

07 Extreme Chess Tactics

by Yochanan Afek

MSRP \$ 21.95



For many years Israeli Grandmaster of Composition and over-the-board play International Master Yochanan Afek, has been a columnist in Chess

Informant, where he is in charge of the studies section, but as far as I'm aware this is the first book in English that he has written solely by himself. Previously he co-authored the acclaimed *Invisible Moves* (New In Chess 2014) with Emmanuel Neiman. The present work contains fifteen chapters, each of which features a specific theme. These are discussed and illustrated by practical examples, after which the reader is challenged to solve test positions. Positions have been taken in equal measure

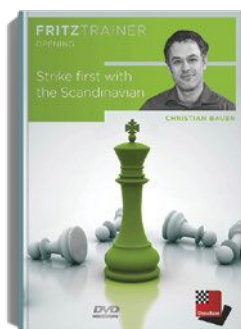


from both games and studies, which highlights the fact that tactics can occur with just a few pieces on the board. In the final chapter, the reader is invited to solve a series of positions without knowing whether it is a mate, a win, or a draw, that has to be found. Then again, there are also studies to be solved, where you are in fact told whether one side is trying to win or draw. Such rich content makes for an instructive book that will help to broaden your tactical vision.

08 Strike first with the Scandinavian (DVD-ROM/download)

by Christian Bauer

MSRP \$ 33.95



Seven years ago, French Grandmaster Bauer wrote probably the best book ever on the Scandinavian with 2... Nxd5 and 3... Nxa5 . The present DVD features

the same opening but presented in a different format with Bauer actually talking us through the moves and the game references. There are a total of 31 videos covering main lines as well as lesser variations where White tries to sidestep the principal paths. Bauer also gives an introduction and a conclusion. The presentation is rounded off with 13 interactive test positions where the viewers can try their hand at solving the positions. This is a good way of rounding off a study of the opening as it ensures that the viewer has understood the basic concepts and critical ideas behind Black's opening.

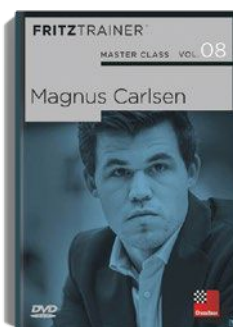
However, despite the obvious quality of this DVD, I did get the impression that the French GM is not entirely comfortable with speaking in English which though perfectly understandable makes his presentation rather less enjoyable to watch than,

for example, the other DVD-ROM from ChessBase that we discuss below. The DVD is also available in German and also French – which I expect has a much smoother flow than the English version.

09 Master Class Vol. 8: Magnus Carlsen (DVD-ROM/download)

by Dr. Karsten Mueller, Mihail Marin, Oliver Reeh, Niclas Huschenbeth

MSRP \$ 33.95



This Master Class series has so far featured world champions Fischer, Kasparov, Karpov, Capablanca, Tal, Alekhine, and Lasker. Now we have

coverage of the play of the present title holder, which is divided into the following segments: Contents/Introduction, Openings, Strategy, Tactics, Endgames, Short Biography and then an examination of the crosstables of tournaments in which he has participated.

In the openings segment, Huschenbeth draws some surprising conclusions which had not previously occurred to me – but the way the German grandmaster argues his case is convincing.

Mihail Marin hosts the Strategy section and it is revealing to hear how genuinely puzzled he is with Carlsen's handling of chess strategy, comparing him to some extent with Fischer but nevertheless finding his approach quite unique. In the examples under consideration he several times uses the expression "a mysterious move" which reinforces why Carlsen is such a difficult opponent. I found myself enjoying this section more than any of the others and the incorporated tests break the monotony of passively watching Carlsen crush his opponents one after the other!

The Tactics section is taken care of by International Master Oliver Reeh who, incidentally, also handles this department in ChessBase Magazine. The examples are well-chosen, instructive and interactive.

The Endgames section is presented by Grandmaster Karsten Mueller – one of the world's leading endgame specialists. He has uncovered a number of really instructive and interesting examples, although sometimes I feel that Mueller rushes through the material too quickly and that's a shame. As is his custom, Mueller provides analysis to show the relevance of the lines of play under consideration, but for the average student this is high-level stuff and not always easy to follow. I feel the instructive value of Mueller's presentation would be considerably stronger if he devoted more attention to explaining the endgame concepts and the motifs he is discussing.

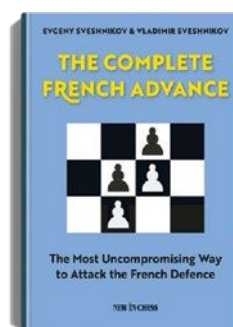
Of the four presenters, only Reeh speaks flawless English, whereas the others occasionally misuse or mispronounce words. Nevertheless the lessons can be understood without too much effort.

Overall, this is an effective way of learning about the featured champion, whilst receiving high-level instruction by means of high quality material. So if Magnus Carlsen is your favorite player or you just want to learn more about his methods, then this is a good place to go.

10 The Complete French Advance

by Evgeny Sveshnikov & Vladimir Sveshnikov

MSRP \$ 32.95



Grandmaster Sveshnikov is unquestionably "Mr 3.e5" against the French. Few players have been as loyal to the move and written as extensively

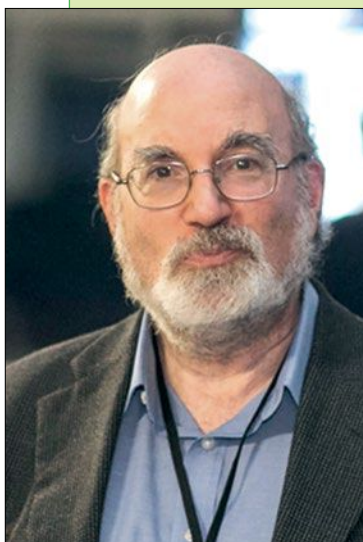
about it as he has. A decade ago he wrote a two-volume work on the French Advance Variation for the Swiss publisher Olms but the present monograph has been considerably expanded. Needless to say this update is long overdue in view of the sheer volume of new games constantly being played and the consequent rapid advances of opening theory.

For this book, Evgeny Sveshnikov has been helped by his son, Vladimir, who is an International Master and last year's Latvian Champion. Yet, curiously, Vladimir is actually something of a 3.e5 skeptic who does not really believe this is the best way to meet the French Defense! Nevertheless Evgeny thinks he may have managed to sway his son's opinion by showing him the resources and possibilities inherent in this opening variation.

The book is divided into six chapters, of which only one, of 45 pages, is dedicated specifically to theory. The remainder of the book is devoted to helping the reader better understand the variation, in terms of its historical development and both principal and secondary plans of play, with the accompaniment of test yourself positions and solutions. The whole book is constructed around 130 main games, some of which are thoroughly annotated, others in a much lighter vein. In general, I found this book very educational and enlightening. It is not top heavy on theoretical discursions, so theory buffs may end up being a little disappointed, but those truly interested in learning how to play the opening, as well as understanding why the moves are being played, will find this the perfect solution. ■

DATABASE WAR

by **Jon Edwards**



Jon Edwards is an ICCF Senior International Master living in Pennington, NJ. He won the 10th US Championship and is now competing in the World Correspondence Candidates. He has written more than 40 chess books, notably *The Chess Analyst* (1999), *Sacking the Citadel* (2010), and *ChessBase Complete* (2014). He is regular columnist for *Chess Life for Kids*. His web site, *Chess is Fun*, provides free chess instruction.

The idea is simple enough. Early chess programmers imagined that we might someday be able to solve the game.

Readers appreciate book reviews because such expensive purchases should not disappoint. So too with purchases of expensive chess data collections.

We often refer to ChessBase and Chess Assistant as databases, but they are really software applications, the chess equivalent of Microsoft Word or Excel. Those Office applications permit you to create files that contain and manipulate words or numbers, and they do that quite well, but the word processing and spreadsheet applications do not come with words and numbers. Those you enter or acquire yourself.

The basic ChessBase and Chess Assistant packages do come with large, unannotated game collections. The more interesting annotated game collections cost much more. Yes, that's right. Buying ChessBase or Chess Assistant is just the start. The quality of your chess work very much depends upon the quality of the data. As technologists often say, "Garbage in, Garbage out."

For this column, I will be using five large game collections, four of which you can buy and one of which is available as a free download. ChessBase provides three of the five: The Mega Database (2017),

Notation - Openings Book

Moves	Reference	Table	Training	Score sheet	LiveBook	Openings Book
5...Nb8-c6		242		53.2%		
5...d7-d5		20		68.2%		
5...c7-c6		18		61.1%		
5...Ba6-b7		12		60.0%		
5...Bf8-e7		5		83.3%		
5...c7-c5		4		83.3%		
---		1		0.0%		

White Elo W Black Elo B Result Year Notation

Feller	2626	Navara	2751	0-1	2015	5...Nc6 6.Nbd2 Na5 7.Qa4 Bb7 8.Bg2 R
Vachier Lagrave	2757	Karjakin	2767	½-½	2014	5...Nc6 6.Nbd2 Na5 7.Qc3 c5 8.dxc5 b
Korobov	2680	Ponomarev	2711	1-0	2014	5...d5 6.cxd5 Qxd5 7.Qc2 Nc6 8.Nc3 N
Vachier Lagrave	2757	Karjakin	2767	½-½	2014	5...Nc6 6.Nbd2 Na5 7.Qc3 c5 8.dxc5 b
Gelfand	2748	Karjakin	2767	½	2014	5...Nc6 6.Nbd2 Na5 7.Qa4 Bb7 8.Bg2 c
Morozevich	2736	Karjakin	2776	0-1	2013	5...Nc6 6.Nbd2 Na5 7.Qc3 c5 8.dxc5 b
Zakharov	2548	Banikas	2628	½-½	2015	5...Nc6 6.Nbd2 Na5 7.Qa4 Bb7 8.Bg2 c
Ponomarev	2764	Ivanchuk	2768	½-½	2011	5...d5 6.cxd5 Qxd5 7.Nc3 Qxb3 8.axb3
Morozevich	2758	Sasikiran	2680	=	2012	5...Nc6 6.Nbd2 Bb7 7.e4 d5 8.cxd5 exd
Adhiban	2569	Sasikiran	2666	1-0	2013	5...Nc6 6.Nbd2 Bb7 7.e4 d5 8.cxd5 exd
Shirov	2745	Gelfand	2733	0-1	2009	5...Nc6 6.Nbd2 Na5 7.Qc3 c5 8.dxc5 b
Navara	2715	Mareco	2561	=	2013	5...Nc6 6.Nbd2 Na5 7.Qa4 Bb7 8.Bg2 c
Eljanov	2720	Kamsky	2729	1-0	2008	5...c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Nc3 g5 9.
Navara	2646	Ivanchuk	2781	½-½	2008	5...Nc6 6.Nbd2 Bb7 7.e4 d5 8.cxd5 exd
Ipatov	2512	Zhigalko	2671	1-0	2011	5...c6 6.Bg5 Be7 7.Nc3 h6 8.Bxf6 Bxf6 9
Morozevich	2741	Anand	2779	½-½	2007	5...d5 6.cxd5 Qxd5 7.Qd1 c5 8.Nc3 Qd1
Morozevich	2741	Leko	2749	1-0	2007	5...Be7 6.Nc3 0-0 7.e4 c5 8.d5 exd5 9.e
Morozevich	2741	Anand	2779	=	2007	5...d5 6.cxd5 Qxd5 7.Qd1 c5 8.Nc3 Qd1
Morozevich	2741	Aronian	2744	=	2007	5...Nc6 6.Nbd2 Na5 7.Qc3 c5 8.dxc5 b
Wojtaszek	2717	Djokic	2523	½	2012	5...Nc6 6.Nbd2 Na5 7.Qa4 c5 8.e4 Bb7

Main Line: 5...Nc6 6.Nbd2 Na5, (79)

NOTE: A useful alternative method... from a board containing this position, use the reference tab to call up new database with the games in this variation. In essence, the new database becomes your reference database.

the Opening Encyclopedia (2017), and the Correspondence Chess Database (2018). Chess Informant now contributes the Paramount DataBase which contains all of the Chess Informant tournament game data in electronic formats.

And finally, I will use an important free database from the ICCF, the International Correspondence Chess Federation. As you will see, I regard this last database as the most important of all.

On a personal note, I have recently been invited to participate in a prestigious Spanish correspondence chess event. The preparation for that tournament is rather intense and so, I shall tackle two projects at the same time. I have become interested in playing the white side of the Queen's Indian after 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 b6 4.g3 ♙a6 5.♙b3!? and so, I will use that preparation as my approach to evaluating the relative attributes of these very large game collections.

I began by creating a new database for the games in this line. I then moved in the following:

Mega Database:

60 annotated games.

Opening Encyclopedia:

11 Opening Surveys (note that this database also contains the exact same annotated games that exist in the Mega Database. I did not enter them here in order to avoid duplication)

Paramount Database:

86 annotated games/game fragments.

Correspondence Chess Database:

123 games (none were annotated)

I then called up the new database using ChessBase's Opening Reference function.

Highlight the
database

Report tab

Opening
Reference

SEE PHOTO

01

On the left is a board with the diagram after 5.♙b3. The Opening Reference provides a statistic overview which shows that Black's main response is 5...♘c6 (with the threat of ...♘a5). Alternative responses by Black are not faring well statistically. The list of games on the right involves some duplication because they appear in multiple databases. They are here because every grandmaster opinion is worthy of respect but the duplication does distort the statistics.

The over-the-board games here are all annotated and so each becomes a potentially valuable source. Manic as I am, I tend to play through all of them. All the more reason to have them organized so conveniently.

The heavily annotated games within ChessBase are equally available within the Mega DataBase and the Opening Encyclopedia. The Mega Database also contains the large volume of games that also come within ChessBase's "Big Database." The Opening Encyclopedia does not contain the large number of unannotated games but does contain the Opening Surveys that are also present in each issue of ChessBase Magazine. If you have not faithfully subscribed, you can still reap the benefit.

One of the key games in this line was played in 2004 between Viktor Bologan and Michael Adams. In this case, two pictures may be worth a thousand words. This first image is from the Mega Database.

SEE PHOTO

02

02

Bologan, Viktor 2679 - Adams, Michael 2720 ½-½  
E15 Corus Wijk aan Zee (11) 23.01.2004 [Gershon]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.Qb3 Nc6 6.Nbd2 Na5 7.Qc3 c5 8.dxc5 bxc5 9.e4 Bb7 10.e5 Ne4 11.Nxe4 Bxe4 12.Bg2 Be7 13.0-0 Nc6!7N Bringing the ♘ straining into the game. This move order (instead of 13...Bb8 first) takes away Huzman's idea of transferring the ♘ to b3

[13...Rb8 14.Re1N (black had no problems after 14.b3 Nc6 15.Bb2 0-0 16.Qe3 Bg6 17.Rfd1 Qc7 in Gelfand - Almasi/Budapest 2003) 14...Bg6 15.Nd2 ♘ An interesting idea by white. The knight is heading to b3, intending to open the 'a' file , and through it wants to put pressure on black's position. However, black will have a sufficient counterplay along the 'b' file. f6! Black realizes that he needs to open other fields of battle, in order to develop counterplay 16.Nb3 Nxb3 17.axb3 fxe5 18.Qxe5 (after 18.Rxa7 Qb6 19.Ra5 d6 black has too strong of a center to have any problems.) 18...0-0 19.Rxa7 Rxb3 20.Be3 ♘ Each player has his objects to play against. For now white has the more active pieces, but black's next strong move forces his to exchange his most active one - the ♖ Bf5! ♘ (20...Bf6 21.Qxc5 Rxb2 22.Qd6± ♘) 21.Qc7 (21.Bxc5! was the only way for white to fight for an advantage. However, this continuation involves a great deal of risk. d6 22.Qe2 dxc5 23.g4 Bf6! a) 23...Bd6 24.gxf5 Bxh2+! 25.Kh1 (25.Kxh2 Qb8+ 26.Kg1 Qxa7±) 25...Bb8 26.Qxe6+

03

Bologan, Viktor 2679 - Adams, Michael 2720 ½-½  
E15 Wijk aan Zee 89/439 2004 [Bologan, Viktor]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.Qb3 Nc6 6.Nbd2 Na5 7.Qc3 c5 8.dxc5 bxc5 9.e4 Bb7 10.e5 Ne4 11.Nxe4 Bxe4 12.Bg2 Be7 13.0-0 Nc6N 14.Re1 Bg6 [14...f5 15.exf6 Bxf6 16.Qa3 Bxf3 17.Bxf3 Nd4 18.Be4 0-0 19.Qd3 d5 (19...g6 20.Bh6 d5 21.Bxg6 hxxg6 22.Qxg6+ Kh8 23.Bxf8 Qxf8 24.Qh5+ Kg7 25.Qg4+ Kh6 26.Rac1±) 20.Bxh7+ Kh8 21.Bg6±] 15.Bf4! 0-0 16.Rad1 Rb8 17.Rd2 [17.Nh4 Nd4 18.Nxg6 hxxg6 19.Bc3 Nf5 20.b3 Qc7 21.Bf4 Nd4 22.Qd3 d6! =] 17...Qc7 18.Bg5! [18.Red1 Rfd8 19.b3 Bh5] 18...Bxg5 19.Nxg5 Rfd8 [19...Nd4 20.Nf3 Nxf3+ 21.Bxf3±; 19...f6 20.Bxc6! Qxc6 21.Nh3 fxe5 22.Qxe5 Rb6 23.Nf4±] 20.Rd6 [20.Bxc6 Qxc6 21.Rd6 Qa4 22.Ra1 Qb4 23.Qxb4 Rxb4 24.b3 a5; 20.f4 d6] 20...Nd4 21.Nf3 [21.Ne4 Rb6] 21...Nf5 22.Ra6! [22.Rd2 d6 23.g4 Ne7 24.exd6 Rxd6 25.Qe5 Rbd8 26.Red1 Nc8 (26...Rxd2 27.Rxd2 Qb6 28.Rxd8+ Qxd8 29.h4 Qb6 30.h5) 27.Rxd6 Nxd6 28.b3±] 22...Qb7

04

Queen's Indian - 5.♖b3 ♘c6 6.♘bd2 d5
E15 Survey 2010 [Dautov, Ftacnik]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.Qb3 That move has become very popular in last few years. This is the sharpest of all the alternatives at White's disposal. Nc6 ♘c6 The most principal continuation. Black is trying to use some vulnerability of ♖b3. The most usual and best move. 6.Nbd2 White not only protects the c4-pawn, but prepares e4 as well. d5 That is Anand's favourite. This move has a clear drawback: the pawn structure is in white's favour, and he may reach advantage if he could transfer his knight to c3. 7.Qa4 [7.Bg2 That is probably the most direct order of moves. Qd7 Black doesn't move to remove his bishop from a6, because it puts pressure on white's pawns c4 and e2. although in the following game his position was rather suspicious: a) there are some alternatives, after which white has good chances to reach advantage: 7...Bb7 8.cxd5 (8.0-0 Be7 (8...Bd6 9.cxd5 exd5 10.Nb1 A typical knight transfer. The knight is much better placed on c3, where he can put pressure on d5 and does not block the way of the dark bishop. 0-0 11.Nc3 (11.Bg5!) 11...Na5! Winning an important tempo for h7-g4 12.Qc2 h6 now the bishop on c1 has no good squares. 13.Bf4 Bxf4 14.gxf4 c5! Trying to exploit white's kingside weakening by striking in the center, but white is better prepared for an open game. (a strong alternative, however, was to keep the center closed: 14...Nc4!) 15.Rad1 Qe7 16.Ne5 Rfd8 17.e3 Nc6 18.Qf5 the 'g' file will soon become a path for white rook to target the king. Nb4 (18...cxd4 19.Nxc6 Bxc6 20.Rxd4± 18...Qe6 19.Qxe6 fxe6 20.Bh3

The second is the coverage of the same game in the Paramount database. At first glance, Paramount's coverage seems far less extensive, but it is provided by one of the two players! Paramount is now available for Informants 1-130. To keep this wonderful database up-to-date, I subscribe to the Informant with its CD. That way, I can manually add each new volume's games to the existing data collection.

SEE PHOTO 03

And here is an example on one of the ChessBase surveys.

SEE PHOTO 04

By placing all of the annotated material into the same database, relevant material is easy to sort and find. There are a couple of drawbacks, however. The duplication of games affects the statistics, and the surveys are not treated as games (because they are not recorded as wins or draws) and therefore disappear from the list much earlier than I would like.

Still, this approach is far superior to copying and then pasting the large, annotated games into a single large file. The final result would then be unwieldy – you will lose the authorship of each comment, and the new larger game invites memory and data-saving issues.

Finally, a word about two Correspondence chess databases. ChessBase has just released its Correspondence Chess Database 2018, approximately three years after its last release. For a brief moment in time, this database represents a breathtaking window into the opening theory practiced by top flight correspondence players. Of course, month by month, the database will get increasingly out-of-date.

For those who are dreading the monetary requirements of this new data world, know that you can freely obtain fully current correspondence data from www.iccf.com, the web site maintained by the International Correspondence Chess Federation. You will have to become a member, albeit at no cost, and you will then gain access to the ICCF Game Archive. In my opinion, the new ICCF games represent the cutting edge of opening theory. While none of these games are annotated, any wins there should command your attention.

SEE PHOTO 05

Home Home > ICCF Games Archive

ICCF Games Archive

Login required

- Server month 201709
- Server month 201708
- Server month 201707
- Server month 201706
- Server month 201705
- Server month 201704
- Server month 201703
- Server month 201702
- Server month 201701
- Server Year 2016 all games ended in 2016
- Server Year 2015 all games ended in 2015 updated 01/01/2017
- Server month 201612
- Server month 201611
- Server month 201610
- Server month 201609
- Server month 201608
- Server month 201607
- Server month 201606

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Server month 201706

Server month 201705

Server month 201704

Server month 201703

Server month 201702

Server month 201701

Server Year 2016 all games ended in 2016

Server Year 2015 all games ended in 2015 updated 01/01/2017

Server month 201612

Server month 201611

Server month 201610

Server month 201609

Server month 201608

Server month 201607

Server month 201606

Every completed game in the ICCF is automatically added to its archive, whose updated contents are available to members at the end of every month.

Man v Machine

The most exciting chess games of the past month were played by...computers! The chess world heated up like an overclocked CPU in November with the 10th season of the TCEC (Top Chess Engine Championship) and the inaugural Chess.com Computer Chess Championship (CCCC).

In

case you missed the memo, the best chess players on the planet are now computers. Period. And it's not even close. (Darn you! and

thanks for the ugly reminder, Danny!),

Even as our chess inferiority to our own creation has become an accepted way of life for mankind, one question remains about the future of computer chess that was answered this month: Can we enjoy computer chess as much as we learn from it?

For professional chess players, engines have one, main purpose: to help us beat other humans. Titled players have used a chess engine to prepare openings, analyze complicated positions, and find some "deep answers" (perhaps even thinking overnight in the hotel room before a big match). Our creation has served us well in our human-vs-human matchups, and for many, that is all that matters about computer chess.

However, for their developers and the "Deep Thinkers" (stealing a term from Garry Kasparov's latest book, *Deep Thinking*) behind AI in chess, the strength and abilities of a chess engine mean so much more! It's validation! Recognition! Sweet victory! The TCEC is the latest of what has always been a pastime for chess engine software teams: a computer-vs-computer world chess championship!

While every computer can beat humans, and they can all help us analyze our own games and prepare openings, the question of "who is the best?" among the silicon-chess elite is renewed every year in the TCEC. It's an amazing event for the most hardcore of chess-engine fans, and while the games are very long, nothing beats the thrill of seeing two super chess geniuses disagree on a chess position,

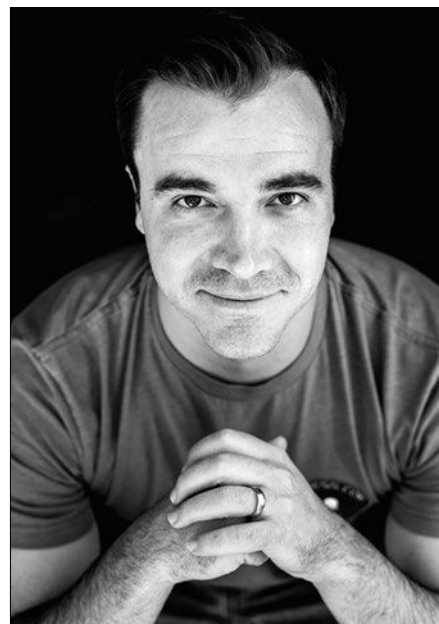
only to find one was wrong because of a miscue 37 moves from the current position!

As exciting as the TCEC is for those "hardcore engine nerds" (sorry, no better term available), and as high-quality as those games are (truly, second to none including the human world championship) – the one thing that Chess.com always felt was missing (because could it even be done?) was commentary and entertainment! Would humans come together as humans to watch two humans comment on two non-humans do something? And could we enjoy it?

Well, while it may not come as a surprise to people that chess engines have reached the levels of 3400+ Elo, and that no human can compete against them without the help of serious odds (Chess.com holds regular "man-vs-machine" matches that find fun ways to do exactly that) – what might intrigue you is that the answer to whether humans can enjoy watching machines play chess is a resounding yes!

During our Computer Chess Championship, Grandmaster Robert Hess and I provided real-time commentary on battles between engines, something never professionally done before. While we could never pretend to see everything Komodo did vs Stockfish, what we tried to understand was the meaning of things after they happened. And using our communication skills as chess professionals and coaches, we could then educate and entertain chess fans with this knowledge (or at least our opinions). And the results? Hundreds of thousands of unique online viewers tuned in, and tens of thousands more views are being racked up on YouTube and Chess.com's own video library of these matches as I write this article!

Somehow, we've come full circle.

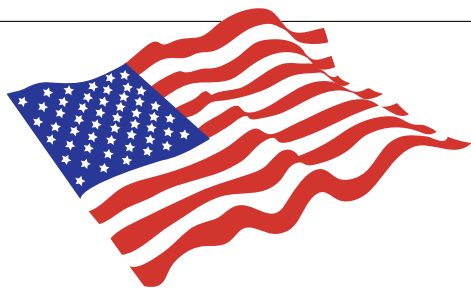


by **IM Danny Rensch**

Computer chess, which once could not defeat Garry Kasparov despite its brute force of CPUs (Deep Blue), is now helping us to understand our own game at a level we never thought possible. No, our approach to chess can never be the ruthless, depth=24 view that Stockfish takes to every position, but using our own strengths, and seeing the moves computers find in critical moments, we can learn to be more unbiased in our chess. We can push ourselves deeper and evaluate things in ways that we didn't before.

After a week of commentating on the games, I understand that we can even learn to guess the computer moves before they play them, without help. Robert and I learned ourselves – we began thinking much more like Houdini and Stockfish by the final day than we did at the start of the event.

So what does it all mean? Maybe that the end is near and Skynet will soon become self-aware. ☺ (If so, I'll be your John Connor, so don't worry). Or maybe it means that our own invention might be more fun to "play with" than we first thought, despite its lack of emotion! Besides, even if the Terminator is on his way, we might as well have fun watching some super-amazing chess!



MUSINGS of an AMERICAN GRANDMASTER

by **GM Joel Benjamin**



Grandmaster Road Trip... or You Better Be Good For Goodness Sake

I always enjoy reading about the latest adventures of the globetrotting British grandmaster Nigel Short. Though I would not personally enjoy slogging through the third world, I envy the pleasure Nigel derives from his travels, and the way his hosts enthusiastically welcome him, at least to the best of their abilities.

As a father of two youngsters, constrained by responsibilities and budgetary concerns, I rarely get the opportunity to travel these days. The last two years I have taken a shot at the U.S. Open, with decent but hard to obtain prize money, and the extra incentive of a precious invitation to the U.S. Championship for the winner.

Unfortunately, there are no grateful locals or chess officials laying down the red carpet for me. So unlike my sesquipedalian contemporary from across the pond, I must grudgingly reach into my pockets for a try at the pot of gold.

Last year I laid an egg in the last round game against Gil Popilski and had to settle for a meager prize that

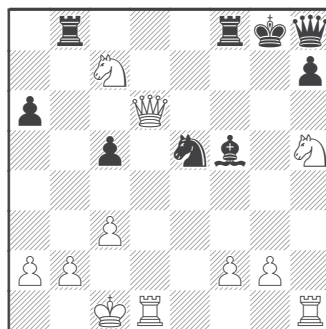
did not even balance out my airfare. In the summer of 2017 I could at least play in a decent environment. Gone was the middle-of-nowhere site in Indianapolis, with a hotel that cleans your room *after* you check out. Norfolk offered a pleasant hotel with a number of quality dining options nearby. Alas, the story was the same for me in the

end...or perhaps even worse. But let's have a look at how I got there.

The first round went smoothly enough, but my sloppy technique convinced my opponent to offer a draw in the fifth hour...he resigned about five moves later. In the second round I tortured an expert with the bishop pair in an endgame. By the third round I was up to master opposition.

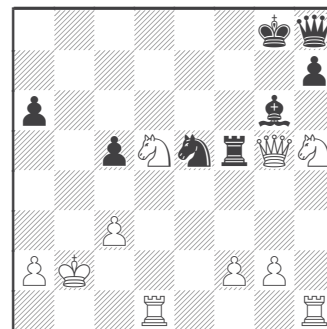
Joel Benjamin	2544
Benjamin Frenkel	2115

Round 3, US Open Norfolk, 2017



24...♖f7 I had a momentary freak-out when I noticed 24...♜xb2 25.♞d5+ ♜f7 26.♜xb2 ♜b8+, but after 27.♞b3 ♜xb3+ 28.axb3, the computer assures me I am still up six points! ♜h1-e1-e8 is more or less unstoppable.

25.♜d5 ♜xb2 26.♞d8+ ♜f8 27.♞g5+ ♜g6 28.♜xb2 ♜f5



After the game, my teenaged opponent told me, rather sheepishly, that he was playing for 29.♜e7+ ♜f7 30.♜xf5 ♜c4+, though it seems even this goes nowhere after 31.♜c2. I thought the



trick was a bit clever and I liked that he showed consciousness of chess etiquette. I asked him if he got called Benjamin Franklin a lot, and not surprisingly, the answer was yes. Nice kid.

29. ♖d8+ ♜f8 30. ♜df6+

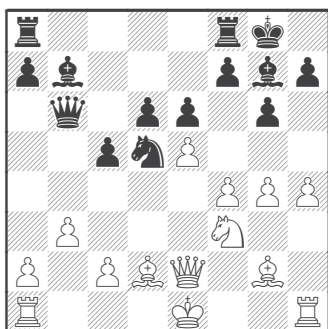
Black resigned

The fourth round brought a senior master, the first moment that I felt any vulnerability to this point. Yet my game with Bryce Tiglon, a very talented young Washingtonian, turned out to be a lot easier than expected. I caught him in a pet line of the Modern Defense and he just couldn't find his way.

Bruce Tiglon 2395

Joel Benjamin 2544

Round 4, US Open, Norfolk 2017



17...c4 18.bxc4 ♜b4 19. ♖c3 ♜xc2+ 20. ♖xc2 ♖e3+ 21. ♖e2 ♖xc3+ 22. ♜f2 ♖xf3 23. ♖xf3 ♜ab8 24. ♜hc1 ♖d4+ 25. ♖e3 ♖b2+ 26. ♜f1 dxe5 27.fxe5 ♖xe5 28. ♖e2 ♖d4 29. ♖d3 ♖c5 30. ♖f3 ♖d4 31. ♜g2 ♖b2 32. ♜ab1 ♖xa2 33. ♖b3 ♖d2

White resigned

It was a good game for me, though I have to admit it was very easy to play. I was very familiar with the ideas in the variation, and had no difficult decisions to make in the whole game. On the other hand, it was a very unrepresentative game for my opponent, and I know a lot of people would storm off angrily after such a debacle. I was impressed that Bryce calmly asked me a lot of questions about the opening, hoping for some useful advice, which I hope I was able to give.

Okay, it gets serious now. Being a middling rated GM, I could get the lowest

player in the score group (still would be a tough player) or the highest. I went up.

B10

Joel Benjamin 2544

Ilya Nyzhnyk 2622

Round 5, US Open, Norfolk 2017

1.e4 c6 2.c4 d5 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.exd5 ♜f6 5. ♜c3 ♜xd5 6. ♜f3 ♜c6 7. ♖b5 e6 8.0-0 ♖e7 9.d4 0-0 10. ♜e1 ♖d7

Though Nyzhnyk has played the Caro-Kann many times, he was surprised by my move order, which avoided the way he likes to play against the Panov Attack. I have had a number of opponents play 10...a6?!, which just leads to a dismal position after 11. ♖xc6 bxc6 12. ♜a4. I lost one game from a winning position and won the others. Nyzhnyk plays the best move, and suddenly I had a funny feeling because there was something I didn't quite understand. I played what I thought I was supposed to play – I didn't see anything else too impressive – but wasn't happy with it.

11. ♖d3 ♖f6



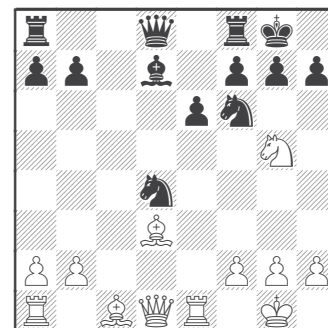
Yeah, that's the problem. This move has only been played ten times out of ninety games, but it makes the most sense to me. I didn't know what to do. 12. ♖e4 is what White does in the main line position with the bishop on c8, but here after 12... ♜ce7 it seemed like Black had a *useful* extra tempo. Upon reflection there are certainly other moves White can try here, but I was very disheartened to be so uncertain in my own pet line.

12. ♜e4!? This interesting move has been played a few times before. Nyzhnyk pored over the ramifications of White's

pawn sacrifice, but honestly, I thought if he took the pawn we would just have a draw. That seemed okay to me at the time, even with White, because I play so many long games and it seemed a rest might do me some good.

12... ♖xd4 13. ♜xd4 13. ♜eg5 h6 14. ♖h7+ (14. ♜h7? ♖xf2+ 15. ♜xf2 ♖b6+ is very good for Black, as White can't enjoy the extra piece with his king unsafe and his knight stranded on h7; e.g. 16. ♜g3 ♖fd8 or 16. ♜f1 ♜cb4) 14... ♜h8 15. ♜xd4 ♜xd4 (15... hxcg5 16. ♖c2 ♜g8 17. ♖h5 ♜f6 18. ♜xc6 ♖xc6 19. ♖xg5 is also sort of equal) 16. ♖xd4 hxcg5 17. ♖c2 f5 and White had enough, though not more, compensation for the pawn A.Filippov - M.Turov, Tashkent 2011.

13... ♜xd4 14. ♜g5 ♜f6 I didn't mind 14...f5 15. ♖c4 ♖f6 16. ♖xd5 exd5 17. ♖e3 h6. I figured I would be okay with my dark square control. Here 14...h6 would be answered by 15. ♜h7!, e.g. 15... ♖e8 16. ♖xh6 with an edge for White.



15. ♜xh7 He seemed a bit relieved when I played this...

15... ♜xh7 16. ♖xh7+ ♜xh7 17. ♖xd4 I offered a draw which was quickly accepted, as neither side can hope for much.

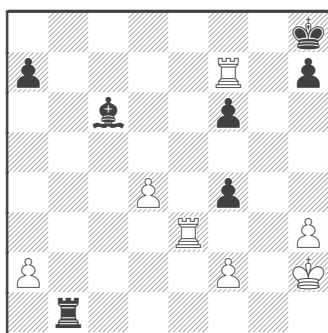
It doesn't seem like a game with a lot to talk about, but Nyzhnyk suggested that we have a post-mortem. I don't have many games with grandmasters these days, and most of the time they are very long or we have another game to play in an hour or they are boring draws. But I know I'm not too old to learn, so I was happy to accept.

I honestly didn't even know where the skittles room was, but we found our way there and started analyzing. I was surprised when Ilya suggested that

The next round I was paired down but I didn't expect an easy game from the dangerous young talent Sam Schminkel.

Sam Schminkel	2381
Joel Benjamin	2544

28...♔xd4 29.cxd4 f6 30.♘g4 ♖b1+
31.♔h2 ♙c6 32.♘h6+ ♔h8 33.♘f7+
♖xf7 34.♖xf7 f4



35.d5 Accurately calculated, though 35.♖e8+ ♗xe8 36.♖f8+ ♔g7 37.♖xe8 ♖b2 38.♔g2 is good enough to draw as well.

35...fxe3 36.dxc6 e2 36...exf2 37.c7 ♖c1 38.♖xf6 ♖xc7 39.♖xf2 is just another way to liquidate.

37.c7 ♖c1 38.♖e7 ♖xc7 39.♖xe2 ♔g7 40.♔g2 ♔f7 41.♖e4 ♖c5

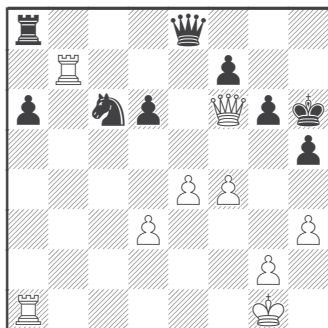
Draw

I really didn't mind drawing this game. I made decent decisions based on what I saw. I was never winning and things could have easily ended worse for me.

Pushed back into a larger score group, I got a player I should handle with White, 14-year-old Ivan Ke.

Joel Benjamin	2544
Ivan Ke	2197

Round 7, US Open, Norfolk 2017



40...♗d8 41.♖e7 ♖f8 42.♖a5 ♔h7 43.f5 ♖h6 44.fxg6+ ♖xg6 45.♖f4 ♗e6 46.♖xf7+ ♖xf7 47.♖xf7+ ♔g6 48.♖d7 ♗f4 49.♖xd6+ ♔g7 50.♖f5

Black resigned

It was a hard-fought game, and I wasn't

too sure things were working out for me until near the end. My opponent had some quirky mannerisms, but perhaps he's just a nervous kid. But the game really could have ended ten moves earlier. I understand that a lot of kids who started young tend to resign late out of habits they developed early on. But the better move would be to resign this hopeless position and ask me to go over the game, or at least get my opinion on where he went wrong. The last bit wasn't too taxing, so my mood wasn't spoiled. If he had asked me for advice, I would have given it to him. But he just walked away. Maybe the chess engine will provide all the answers he needs.

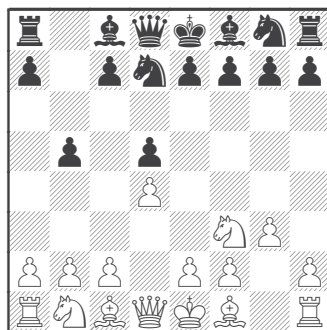
Last year I put up a big win over Timur Gareev in round eight, which at least gave me some solace after the tournament. But this year the drama ended a round early for me after a painful loss to Israeli GM Evgeny Postny.

D02

Joel Benjamin	2544
Evgeny Postny	2558

Round 8, US Open, Norfolk 2017

1.♗f3 d5 2.g3 ♗d7 3.d4 b5!?

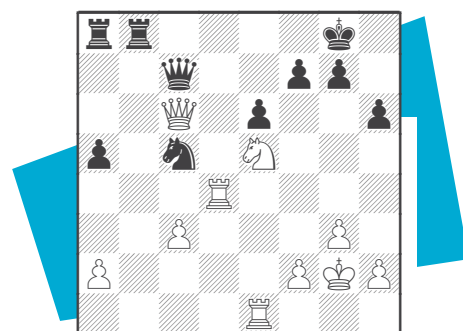


My pre-game planning prepared me for his second move, but not this one! It turns out to be a novelty, no mean feat in an age of millions of games in the database. Normally I'm happy to reach off-beat territory in the opening, but here I couldn't manage to coalesce random thoughts into a coherent plan.

4.c3 e6 5.♗g5 ♗e7 6.♗xe7 ♖xe7 7.♗bd2 ♗gf6 8.♗g2 0-0 9.0-0 c5 10.♖b3 a5 11.♖fe1 b4 12.e4 dxe4 13.♗xe4 ♗xe4 14.♖xe4 ♗b7 15.♖h4 h6 16.♖e1 ♖fd8 17.♖a4 bxc3 18.bxc3

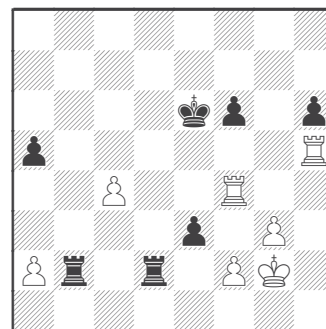
cx d4 White is a bit stuck for useful moves, but this rushed capture lets me off the hook.

19.♖xd4 ♗c5 20.♖b5 ♖c7 21.♗e5 ♗xg2 22.♔xg2 ♖db8 23.♖c6



Here I started to think I was better, which was a bit optimistic. There was no time to get a handle on the position, as time pressure approached.

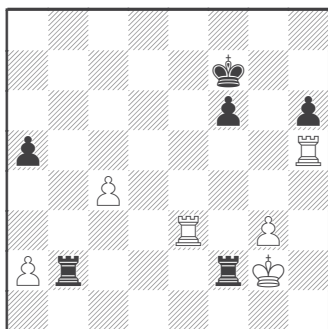
23...♖xc6+ 24.♗xc6 ♖b6 25.♗e5 ♖c8 26.♖ed1 ♖bb8 27.♖c4 f6 28.♗f3 ♔f7 29.♗d4 g6 30.h4 e5 31.♗c2 ♔e6 32.♗e3 ♗d7 33.h5 gxh5 34.♖a4 ♖c5 35.♖h1 ♖b2 36.♖xh5 ♗b6 37.♖a3 ♗d5 38.♗xd5 ♖xd5 39.c4 ♖dd2 40.♖f3 e4 41.♖f4 e3



My opponent was just a step ahead of me. I had time to ponder my predicament but no clearer picture of how to continue. Postny suggested 42.♖hf5, which I rejected because I thought the pawn ending after 42...♖xf2+ 43.♖xf2 ♖xf2+ 44.♖xf2 exf2 45.♔xf2 ♗d6 46.♗e3 ♗c5 was lost. He thought it was a draw, and pointed out that I had time to calculate it. He is right, on all counts! I missed that White has enough time to race: 47.♗e4 ♔xc4 48.♗f5 is a trivial draw. But even 47.♗d3 f5 48.♗c3 h5 49.a3 is good enough to draw, because after 49...f4 50.gxf4 h4 51.f5 h3 52.f6 ♗d6 53.c5+ both sides

queen. Ugh! It's very embarrassing for an author of a book on pawn endings to gloss over one in an important variation. Black could maintain a large edge with 42...♖xa2 43.♗xf6+ ♕e7 44.♗f7+ ♕d6, but of course that's a much better chance than what I went for.

42.♗e4+ ♕f7 43.♗xe3 ♗xf2+



44.♔g1?? Every instinct tells me to keep the king off the back rank, yet I did it anyway. Two miscalculations bedeviled me. I thought 44.♔h3 f5 45.g4 ♗h2+ 46.♔g3 ♗bg2+ 47.♔f4 ♗f2+ would force a win, e.g. 48.♔e5 fxe4, or 48.♔g3 f4 mate. But I blanked out on 48.♗f3, which holds! So Postny would probably just play 44...♗xa2, maintaining winning chances, but not a done deal like the game.

44...♗g2+! My strategy would make sense after 44...♗xa2 45.♗xa5, or 44...♗fc2 45.♗f3. I had planned to answer this check with 45.♔f1, but only now I noticed 45...♗bf2+! 46.♔e1 ♗xa2 and Black wins routinely, much like we see below.

45.♔h1 ♗gc2 46.♗e1 ♗xa2 47.♗xh6 a4 48.♗h5 a3 49.♗a5 ♗h2+ 50.♔g1 ♗ag2+ 51.♔f1 a2 52.♗e4 ♗b2 53.♔g1 ♗hg2+ 54.♔f1 ♗gf2+ 55.♔g1 ♗fd2 56.♗a7+ ♔g6 57.♗g4+ ♔h5 58.♗h4+ ♔g5 59.♗g7+ ♔f5 60.♗f4+ ♔e6
White resigned

It's very distressing to lose a big game without getting to throw a punch (with White no less), but even worse to resist so poorly. I resolved to try to end on a high note and enjoy the last round.

I got my youngest opponent yet, Justin Wang, who was born in 2005! Once upon a time it was relatively easy to take

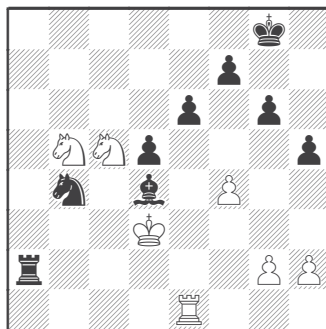


▲ Evgeny Postny. Photo by Harald Fietz

advantage of such a large experience gap, even with a player rated around 2300 USCF. But with databases and engines (not to mention more coaching), kids are usually able to get a position out of the opening they can handle. This time I found the perfect choice and won a smooth game.

Justin Wang	2230
Joel Benjamin	2544

Round 9, US Open, Norfolk 2017



It looks like I've landed a death blow. But apparently it's just a scratch.

42.♔xd4 ♔c2+ 43.♔e5 ♔xe1 44.♔d6 ♔xg2 45.♔d7 ♗a7 46.♔f6+

♔f8 47.♔h7+ ♔g7 48.♔f6 ♔e3 49.♔fe8+ ♔f8 50.♔f6 ♔g4+ 51.♔g5 ♔xh2 52.♔f6 ♔g4 53.♔h7+ ♔g7
White resigned

I had noticed Justin involved in some kind of altercation with Sergey Erenburg in an earlier round. I didn't catch what it was about, but I reckoned Erenburg was not happy about his young opponent's board behavior. I found it rather wanting myself. It seemed that a lot of the pieces he moved just didn't make it to the center of the square. And throughout the game he was constantly sniffing.

So I wasn't favorably disposed to the kid even before he dragged the game on for the last ten pointless moves. There was a time when I would be inclined to deliver a lecture, but I enjoy confrontation a lot less at my advanced age. So I gave him the benefit of the doubt, just asking one question: "Do you have a cold?"

He looked at me like I was crazy.

The aforementioned travelogue writer seems to enjoy the occasional jab at those who cross him, but I do not. I do, however, want goodness to be rewarded. Chess etiquette and sportsmanship matter. Friendliness matters. These things should be done for their own sake, and they make the playing experience a lot more positive one. But the more positive connections you make with other players – especially with knowledgeable and experienced ones – the more benefit comes to your own career.

Parents and teachers must recognize that their youngsters need to learn more about being a chessplayer than just X's and O's. That's the only way you can be sure they will understand. It is fine to want to crush your opponent with nasty chess moves, but you can be a good, well-socialized person in the process.

It's curious that the guy that was most interested in hearing what I had to say didn't need to learn anything from me. Two chessplayers, exploring positions, sharing their love of the game; that's what it's all about. It's what I miss most about the game these days. I hope that in this condensed schedules, my-best-friend-is-the-computer era, people don't lose sight of what makes tournaments fun.

Oh, by the way, my prize check was...88 bucks I think. At least I got to eat some good barbecue in Norfolk. ■



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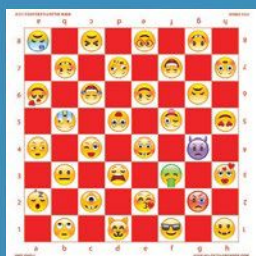


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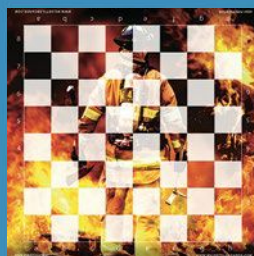
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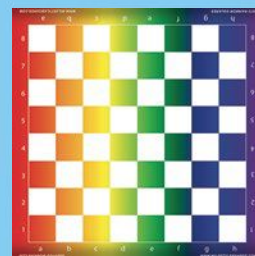
WILD HORSES



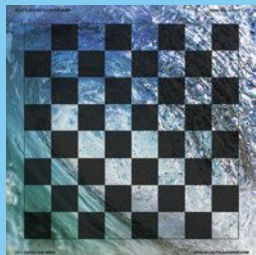
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CHESS PARENT'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

6 tips

for going to chess tournaments

by **Ryan Velez**

At a local event I organized in 2016, a parent came up to me in a panic and said “All the outlets are taken! What do I do?” Jokingly, I told her that power strip rentals are \$20 and she immediately handed me the money. Of course, I gave her money back and loaned her the power strip. But, this experience made me realize a chess column giving practical advice to parents would be helpful.

So, here we are. In the first edition of this column, I’m going to give parents 6 practical tips for going to chess tournaments to help you become the best chess parent you can be.

1

BRING A POWER STRIP.

As chess tournaments can take a while, it can be a good idea to camp out near a power outlet. Unfortunately, everyone has this idea when they go to an event and frustrations begin. If you have your own power strip, nearly anyone is ok to let you sit near them and re-situate the plugs to everyone’s benefit. For new parents, this is a simple way to meet other chess parents to get plugged into the chess community – pun intended.

2

BRING SOMETHING TO DO.

When your kids are playing their games, you’ll want to have something to occupy your time. Remember, chess is not like a basketball or baseball game. You don’t stand in the bleachers and cheer. So, bring something to do whether it is some work, a book, or logging into Netflix on your mobile device. If you have very little to do you can also volunteer to do some sort of job within the tournament. If you wish to volunteer to keep occupied, just ask one of the organizers.



3

EVALUATE YOUR EXPECTATIONS.

Chess is a competitive game and winning is good. However, it is impossible to win all the time. Understanding this can be the difference between your child holding their interest in chess and losing it. When they win, congratulate them; when they lose, ask them how they can improve for the next game? As a parent, it is better to be concerned with making chess a learning experience instead of being too concerned over the specific results of the event.



Photo by Tina Gionis, Nashville 2017.

5

“SAY YES TO NOTATION.”

I always tell kids this little, but very important, joke. Notating is the term we use for writing down all the moves of a chess game. Notation is easy to learn and it is the single best thing any player can do to improve. The sooner your child learns to notate, the faster they will improve. As a parent, you can always ask “Did you notate?” after any game. If your child is refusing to notate you can use incentives until notating becomes second nature to them. Believe it or not, even kindergartners are capable of notating even if they barely know how to write. All they need is practice.

6

SHOW UP EARLY.

Here is a short questionnaire to help you determine if you should show up early:

1. Do you like getting a good parking spot and a good seat?
2. Do you like knowing where your child will be when they are playing?
3. Do you like it when your child knows where to go once their game is finished?

If you answered “Yes” to these questions, then showing up early is for you! In all seriousness, showing up early means your day will go a lot better. Most tournaments open about an hour before round 1 begins. You can walk around without tons of people in your way, you can see the playing hall and the waiting area (often called the “Skittles Room”).

4

SPORTSMANSHIP.

Chess is a game where you put your ego on the line by yourself. With most sports teams, you win and lose together. For example, if the quarterback makes a bad throw and I fail to catch it, the resulting loss is shared. In chess, when you err, it is entirely your fault. Once a game is over, your personal character is the only thing you have in that moment. It is immediately after a game when a player's reputation is most at stake. Teach your kids good sportsmanship and they will learn from their losses more quickly.

Ryan Velez was taught chess at the age of three by his mother. During his first year of high school, he attended his first chess competition and went undefeated. From that point on he found his niche in the chess community as a player. Then, after several tournament victories, he found his niche as a chess instructor starting in 2001. Now, Ryan is a National Chess Master and multi-time state champion. He spends most of this time writing up chess training materials to assist coaches in the classroom. Ryan has served as a delegate in the US Chess Federation for 4 years and has worked with different chess companies from around the country. He is also an active tournament organizer in and around Kentucky.

"DADDY, CAN I SHOW YOU THE CHESS GAME?"

By **Scott Miller**



Daddy, can I show you?

That's usually how it starts. My daughter, like all children, craves her father's attention. Giving it to her is one of life's great joys. But no one said it would be easy.

I've witnessed and approved more underwater hand-stands than are conducive to sanity, in the swimming pool come summertime. My daughter counts to two hundred and fifty, one number at a time, for numberless miles of road travel – when she's not singing

on the top of her lungs. We have completed more floor puzzles than likely reside in the stockroom of the average toy store. And the required currency is always my attention.

My daughter's energy is all good, happy energy and there's nothing hyperactive about it. But there are times when I feel like a rock cliff that's due to topple into the ocean owing to the insistent pressure of erosion. One day even the hardest substance has to yield.

Of course, when you have a child

active in mind and body you have a lot to celebrate. It's a gift the parameters of which none of us possesses the eloquence to fully describe. A mind growing, learning and maturing day by day is a beautiful sight, even if gently guiding the process of a child's maturation can reduce responsible parents to babbling incoherent gibberish in their forlorn solitude come nightfall.

My daughter's energy soon began to exhibit characteristics that were undeniable.

Once in a while, you meet a truly ambidextrous person whose linguistic and quantitative skills are both strong and equal in their extent. My best friend from my MBA class was like that. Since I have a stronger creative and conceptual-

thinker side, he possessed skills in the areas where I was weakest. I've often thought since then that on my MBA degree certificate his name ought to be inscribed next to mine, because without his explanation of abstruse math and statistics I may not have survived to earn my degree.

Neither my daughter nor I are ambidextrous. She has her skills and I have mine. While I write, she measures. Everything. Precisely. I love her attention to detail. Usually



that has to be taught. For my daughter it is innately present, without any prior instruction. That prompts her to ask interesting questions.

"Daddy, how many fish are there in the ocean?"

"As many as God made, sweetheart."

"Daddy?"

"Yes, my love?"

"We can count all the people."

"That's true. We call that a census. It only happens once in a while."

"Is there a fish census?"

"No, there isn't."

"Daddy?"

"Yes?"

"Why can't we count the fish?"

"Well, how would you do it?"

My daughter thinks for a moment.

"You could just ask them."

"OK. So, does a fish have an address?"

She shakes her head.

"So, we couldn't send a fishy letter to their fishy address to ask, could we?"

"No, Daddy."

"They couldn't read the letter anyway, right?"

"Right. But, Daddy?"

"What, honey?"

"Don't we have a machine that can count them?"

"Well, there are ways to estimate fish populations. But we don't have a machine like that yet."

"Why not?"

"Sweetie?"

"Yes, Daddy?"

"Are you hungry? Would you like something to eat or drink? Maybe you feel like playing a game?"

Catering to hunger and thirst or raising a new entertainment opportunity are often my only avenues of escape. Sometimes they set me free, sometimes not.

I love my daughter, more than anything in the world. I'd do anything for her. But after a while I think to myself please, use a bad word, call me anything, but For The Love Of All That's Holy call me anything except

"Daddy" with a question mark at the end. It's generally a delight when my daughter begins her questions that way, it's so tender and sweet. But when she reaches the one hundred and fiftieth "Daddy?" I feel as if I might be developing a nervous tic. Once in a while I even check in the mirror.

The common element between my daughter and I is that we are both strategic thinkers.

I sometimes feel like I'm lodging with a miniature Sun Tzu, who is on her way to penning a twenty-first century version of The Art Of War when she grows up. In the meantime, at the age of five and a half, I teach her chess.

Now, this teaching is really an introduction to the chessboard and how the pieces work and interrelate. We aren't playing chess, and it isn't a competition. I take great pains to let my daughter know that we are never in competition with each other, for anything. But I do show her how the game works. I highlight alternatives and their consequences. I explain how thinking two or three steps ahead can help her make good choices. I hope that's a lesson that takes hold far beyond the confines of the chessboard since, in a very real sense, life itself is a chessboard.

My daughter's patience learning chess endures for longer periods at times than others. But she does learn. Her curiosity won't let her rest for long. She wants to know how the whole system works. Curious about my daughter's own internal engineering, I read up on this. An article from the University of Chicago was especially instructive. It said that working on lots of puzzles and building sets allows the child to exercise the related parts of the brain and expand his or her capabilities. So that's what I've been doing with my daughter. Our excursions into chess are just an extension of that undertaking.

What does my daughter really need? Many things. But when I think two or three steps ahead, like the good chess player I hope that I am, I see a beautiful soul who requires both my attention and my participation in her development. It isn't enough, by itself, that I am focused on her activities. Nor is it enough that I teach her the ways of structuring an edifice or a strategy. Only joined together do devotion and knowledge transference mean anything. Guidance and love merge into one, no matter how tired I may be.

Am I the pawn or the king? Perhaps both. And that's fine by me.



Scott Miller is a single parent who lives with his five-year-old daughter Katie in Tampa, Florida, where he works in luxury real estate and practices martial arts. He first learned chess at the age of five when he was introduced to the King of Sweden, an experience that provided a fascination with the game that has lasted a lifetime.

Virginia IM Is New **Denker** High School Champion

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CARLSEN

By **IM Praveen Balakrishnan**

The Denker High School Championship, a 6-round tournament, was held this year from July 29 to August 1 in Norfolk in my home state of Virginia. There were 11 players rated higher than 2300 which gives an indication of how competitive this event was. I was seeded third with a rating of 2478.

It was a well-organized event with support from many sponsors and a prize for the winner of a \$5000 University scholarship coupled with a ticket to compete in the US Junior Closed Championship next year.

In the final account, Edward Song, Bryce Tiglon, George Li and I were tied for first, and I was fortunate enough to win the first place prize on tiebreaks.

Here is the most crucial game of the tournament...

B90

Praveen Balakrishnan 2478

Bryce Tiglon 2471

Round 5, Denker Tournament 2017

Going into the round, my opponent was leading the tournament with a perfect 4/4 score while I was half a point behind. Therefore I knew that I needed to win this game if I was to have a shot

at winning the tournament. Given that I had the white pieces against a relatively equal-rated opponent, I was confident of my chances.

I am a positional player so I admire Magnus Carlsen, because he is very good at outplaying his opponents from seemingly equal positions.

1.♠f3 c5 2.e4 The game transposes into a Sicilian Defence, one of the sharpest and highly debated openings in modern chess theory.

2...d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6

After blitzing out a few moves, we have reached a Sicilian Najdorf.

There are many ways that White can play here. I

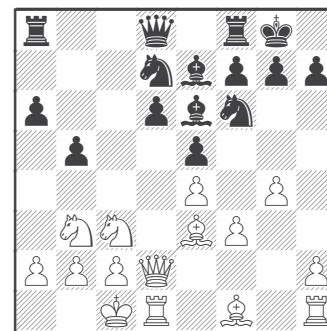
decided to go for the English Attack with 6.♗e3, since I believed it would offer me the most winning chances.

6.♗e3 6...♗e2 tends to lead to more solid, positional types of positions. I have adopted this move many times before but decided not to play it on this occasion so as to avoid any preparation Bryce had in store for me. **6...♗g5** is the most popular move for White nowadays and leads to very sharp, theoretical lines.

6...e5 The main move, aiming to push the white knight out of the center and develop the bishops to e6 and e7.

7.♗b3 ♗e6 8.♖d2 ♗e7 9.f3 Preventing any ...♗g4 tricks that Black might have, as well as preparing the typical g2-g4-g5 push on the kingside.

9...0-0 10.0-0-0 The opposite-sides castling here steers the game into one of an attacking nature, where both sides will be aiming to push their pawns up the board to strike their opponent's king. **10...♗bd7 11.g4 b5**



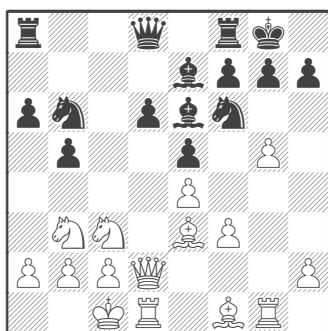
12.♗g1!? This is the second-most popular move and has been employed with success by elite players such as Anand, Leko, and Dominguez. It served as a surprise sideline which got my opponent out of book. **12.g5** is the main move in the position and has been played numerous times in top-level games. Play frequently continues **12...b4 13.♗e2 ♗e8 14.f4 a5 15.f5 a4 16.♗bd4 exd4 17.♗xd4 b3 18.♗b1 bxc2+ 19.♗xc2 ♗b3 20.axb3 axb3 21.♗a3 ♗e5** and there are over 2,000 games reaching this position in my database. Black should hold comfortable equality here.

12...♗b6 The best move, rerouting the knight to a better square and also controlling the key d5-square. The idea of White's previous move was to meet **12...b4** with **13.♗d5 ♗xd5 (13...♗xd5??** is a blunder due to **14.exd5** trapping the bishop, which



is why it is important to leave the pawn on g4 for this line to work.) 14.exd5 a5 15.g5 ♖h5 16.♗b1 a4 17.♕c1 ♔a5 18.♕d3 ♖fb8 19.♙g4± and White's superior piece placement should be enough to fend off Black's advanced pawns and gain an advantage.

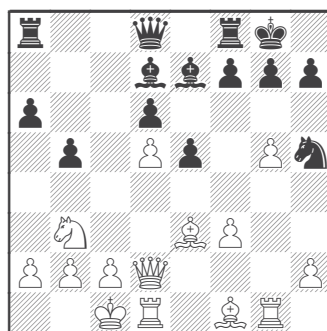
13.g5 Now Black is faced with a tough decision on where to move the knight. 13.♕a5 has also been played quite frequently, with the idea of temporarily blocking Black's queenside pawns and also threatening ideas of playing ♕c6. Then follows 13...♙c8, covering the c6-square and controlling the c-file. 14.g5 ♕h5 15.♗b1 g6 16.♕d5 ♕xd5 17.exd5 ♙xd5 18.♙xa5 ♔xa5 and although Black is a pawn ahead, White should have enough compensation with his bishop pair and active pieces for equality, but nothing more than that.



13...♕h5 Moving the knight to this square has both advantages and disadvantages. This knight serves as a great defender for Black, since it blockades White's projected advance of his h-pawn to h5. However, here the knight can also be considered to be out of play, since it is stuck on the rim and cannot easily get back into the center.

Now 13...b4? isn't as strong as it was before, since White's rook is on g1 and so after 14.gxf6 bxc3 15.♙xg7+! ♕h8 16.♙f2 he has a completely winning attack.

By playing 13...♕fd7, Black could bring a second knight into the queenside attack, but this would leave the kingside vulnerable. Play might continue 14.♕d5 ♙xd5 15.exd5 ♙c8 16.♙e1 ♔c7 17.♙g2 when Black has to do something quickly on the queenside, otherwise White will start to push his h-pawn with a powerful attack. After 17...♕c4 18.♙xc4 bxc4 19.♕a5 c3 20.♙xc3 ♙xc3 21.bxc3 ♙xc3 the ending should be about equal, as in



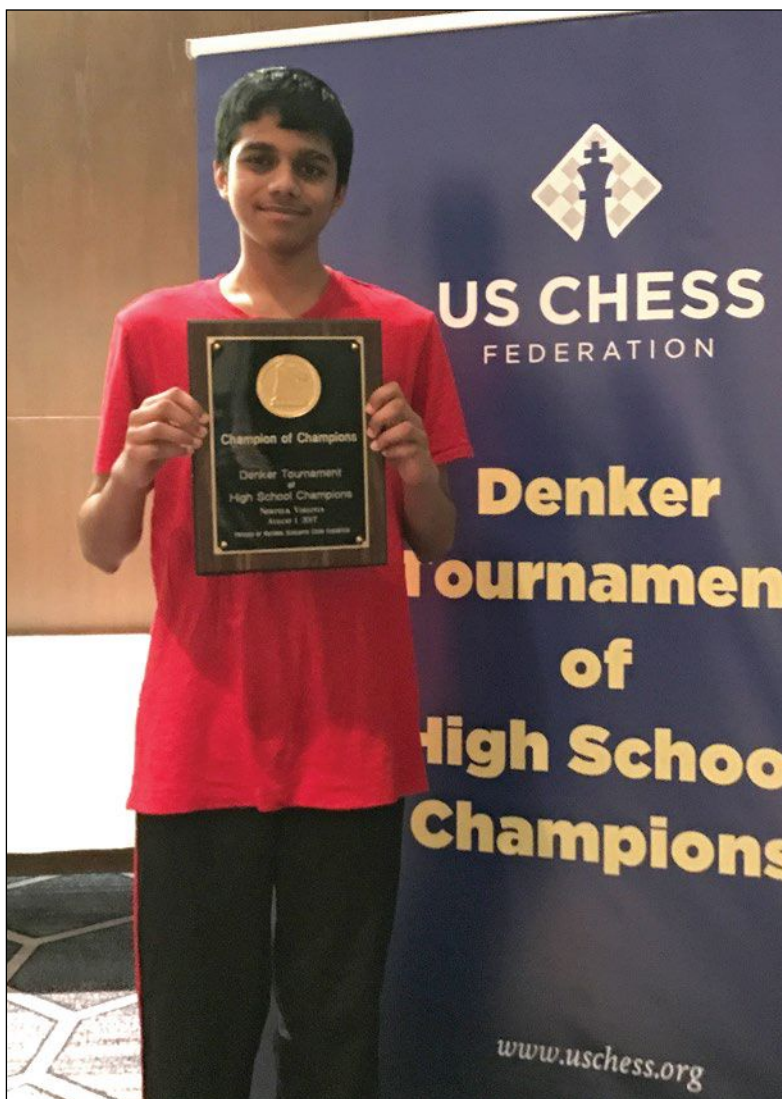
A.Morozevich 2721 - F.Vallejo Pons 2650, Monte Carlo 2006.

14.♕d5 Taking control of the crucial d5-square.

14...♕xd5 15.exd5 ♙d7 15...♙f5 could also be played, but this leaves the c6 square weak. 16.♕a5 ♔c7 17.♕c6± is quite strong for White.

▲ Praveen Balakrishnan, Norfolk 2017.

16.♕c5! Although this is no game-winner, I was pleased to find such a beautiful sacrifice over the board, since it poses Black quite a few problems. 16.♕a5 is the move that I was first considering, however this isn't as strong with the bishop already on d7. Then 16...♔c7 17.♗b1 g6 (17...♕d8 is what I was worried about during the game. However, White can play 18.♕c6 ♙xc6 19.dxc6 ♙xc6 20.♙xd6 ♙xd6 21.♙xd6± and regain his pawn with the advantage of the bishop pair and the more active pieces.) 18.c4 f6 19.♙c1 b4! Sacrificing a pawn to open up the b-file for the

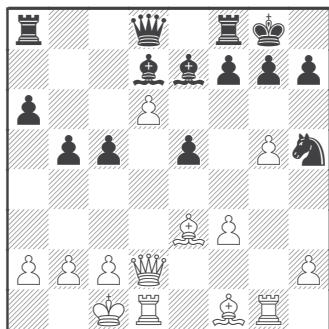


rooks. 20. ♖xb4 ♖ab8 and Black has good compensation for the pawn. E.Inarkiev 2675 - I.Nepomniachtchi 2714, Moscow 2015. 16... dxc5 Accepting the sacrifice allows White to trap Black's dark-squared bishop. If Black chooses not to capture the knight with 16... ♖c7 then I would have been able to obtain a strong position by 17. ♘xd7 ♖xd7 since Black's loss of his light-squared bishop allows White the strong maneuver 18. ♖g4 followed by ♖h4 and ♔h3 with complete domination on the kingside and the light squares.

16... ♔f5, trying to retain the light squared bishop, runs into 17. ♘e4, after which the knight might cause Black some serious problems. White could then just play slowly by bringing his bishop to d3 and moving the king to b1, with an edge: 17... ♖c8 18. ♔d3 ♖d7 19. ♔b1±.

16... ♖c8? just hangs a pawn to 17. ♘xa6 when White can bring the knight back to b4.

17.d6!



17... ♔f6?! Giving up the bishop this way is inaccurate as after the capture,

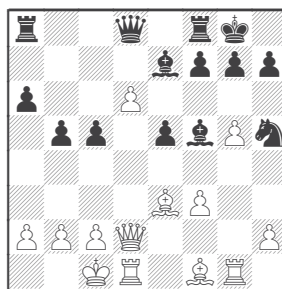
the g-file will be opened up, allowing White to exert pressure on the kingside. Also, the d6-pawn is quite annoying for Black since it is difficult to get rid of.

Also bad are:

17... ♔xg5? Opening the g-file will be disastrous for Black. After 18. ♖xg5! ♔f6 19. ♖xe5± White's position is near crushing.

17... ♔xd6?! Also opening up the d-file is definitely not what Black wants. After 18. ♖xd6 White's activity should allow him to win his pawn back with advantage: 18... ♔f5 19. ♖xe5±.

But 17... ♔f5!



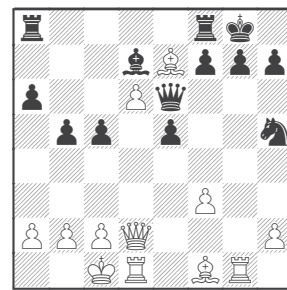
...is an important move activating the bishop and allowing a lot of trades. 18. ♔xc5! (Taking the bishop right away with 18. dxe7? would be a mistake since after 18... ♖xe7± Black is a pawn up

without too many problems.) 18... ♔xd6 19. ♖xd6 (19. ♔xd6 ♖e8 and Black can follow up by activating his rook on the c-file: 20. ♔d3 ♔xd3 21. ♖xd3 ♖c8= with comfortable equality for Black.) 19... ♖xd6 20. ♔xd6 ♖fe8 and in the end an endgame is reached with equal material. Black is able to move his knight to f4 next and should be able to equalize, but I felt that I could press a little bit with my bishop pair.

17... ♔c6! is an interesting move, hitting the f3-pawn. Then 18. ♔xc5. Once again White shouldn't take the bishop immediately. 18... ♔xd6 19. ♔xd6 ♖e8 This isn't as strong as when the bishop is on f5, but Black should still be fine. 20. ♖e3 ♖c8 21. ♔xe5 ♖f5 with enough compensation for the pawn, e.g. 22.f4

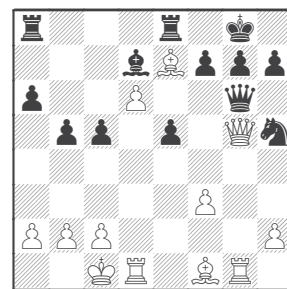
♔xf4! 23. ♖xf4 ♖xe5 24. ♖xe5 ♖xe5=.

18.gxf6 ♖xf6 19. ♔xc5± Simply regaining the pawn. Now the material is level but White has the bishop pair and a strong d6-pawn. 19. ♔g5 is a move that I was considering for some time. Then could follow 19... ♖e6 20. ♔e7!? attacking the f8-rook.



A) 20... ♖xa2? Moving the queen away from the kingside to collect pawns is quite dangerous...for both sides! However, White should be better with accurate play and after 21. ♖h6! ♖a1+ 22. ♔d2 ♖xb2 23. ♖xh5 ♖d4+ 24. ♔d3 he has a piece for three pawns but also an extremely powerful attack. Furthermore, Black's rook is still under attack.

B) 20... ♖fe8 Simply moving the rook allows White to get his queen into play on the kingside. 21. ♖g5! ♖g6



The only way to avoid loss of material. 22. ♖xe5! Sacrificing the rook for immense compensation. 22... ♖xg1 23. ♔h3 and here Black is forced to give back the queen: 23... ♖xd1+ 24. ♔xd1 ♔xh3 25. ♖xh5 ♔d7 26. ♖xc5 and White should be able to win the endgame thanks to his advanced d6-pawn.

C) 20... ♔f4! This exchange sacrifice is why I rejected the line. After 21. ♔xf8 ♖xf8 the problem is that I have no way of kicking out the f4-knight, since I have traded off my dark-squared bishop. Then 22. ♔b1 ♔c6 leaves Black with immense



compensation for the small material deficit.

19...♖f4 Trying to bring the knight back into play after being on the h5-square for so long.

20.♗e3 ♖e6? Retreating the knight is too passive and allows me to develop my light-squared bishop on the h3-c8 diagonal. 20...g6 is the best move, just stabilizing the kingside. After 21.♗xf4 Black takes back with the pawn: 21...exf4 (Trading queens by 21...♗xf4 is advantageous for White: 22.♗xf4 exf4 23.♗d4 and the f4-pawn is dropping.) 22.♗d4 ♗e6 23.b3 and White should have a small advantage due to the huge pawn weakness on f4.

21.♗h3! Now the e6-knight is pinned, making it very uncomfortable for him to hold the position.

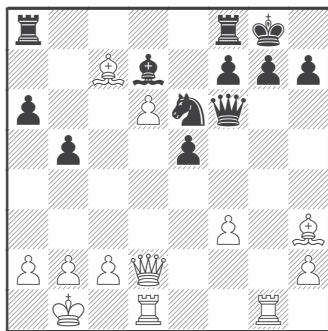
21...♗fd8 Supporting the d7-bishop, but this allows White to attack the d8-rook with tempo.

22.♗b6! Now the idea is to move the bishop to c7, completely blocking the c-file and supporting the strong d6-pawn.

22...♗f8 By going back, Black concedes that he has no hopes of any advantage and is just trying to hold his position.

23.♖b1! A strong prophylactic move, bringing the king to a safer place and also thwarting any hopes that Black had of exchanging queens by ...♗f4.

23...♗ab8 24.♗c7 ♗a8 Once again, by moving back, Black shows that he has no clear plans. 24...♖xc7? is not possible due to 25.dxc7 ♗xh3 26.cxb8 ♗ ♗xb8 27.♗d6 when White is the exchange ahead.



25.♗xe6?! Giving up the bishop pair may not be the most accurate way to convert the advantage. However, Black was threatening ...♖xc7 and I had no intention of retreating my dark-squared bishop. I felt that having opposite-colored

Q&A with Praveen

Just by seeing these detailed annotations, it's hard not to notice how serious Praveen is about advancing in chess. This young man lives in Centreville, Virginia and he's a sophomore at Thomas Jefferson High School of Science and Technology in Alexandria, VA.

Who taught you to play chess?

I borrowed a chess set from my neighbor, took it to my mom and asked her to teach me how to play the game. She googled and learned how the pieces move and taught me the rules of the game. I was 5 years old then. As I progressed, I had chess lessons with FM Steve Stoyko, GM Magesh Panchanathan, and GM Joel Benjamin.

What are your goals for the near future?

Besides being known for its academic rigor, Thomas Jefferson High School also has a very active chess club with very strong players. My goal for the next 3 years is to help my high school win the national chess championship. Individually I would like to become a grandmaster

before I graduate from high school.

Who are your biggest fans and supporters?

My parents and my coaches have all contributed to my successes in chess. I am also thankful to

the tournament organizers in the NJ / NY / PA / MD / VA area where I play chess most of the time. Now I am also getting encouragement from my school's chess club and its sponsors Dr. Zacharias, Dr. Gabor, and TJ Academic Boosters.

How would you describe your playing style?

Positional player. I do not know much opening theory, so try to avoid it as much as I can. I am known to use up all my time on the clock and end up blitzing the last 10 moves to reach time control.

Which top player do you like in terms of playing style?

Magnus Carlsen, because he is very good at outplaying his opponents from seemingly equal positions.

bishops would only increase my attacking potential in this position.

Nevertheless 25.♗a5 is better, with the idea of keeping the bishops on the board and then slowly putting pressure on the black kingside. But I didn't want to allow 25...♖c5, trading bishops. However, after 26.♗g2 ♗xh3 27.♗xh3 ♗e6 28.♗xe6 ♖xe6 29.d7± my pieces are ideally placed to assist the d-pawn.

25...♗xe6 25...♗xe6? is not possible due to 26.d7 and White wins material.

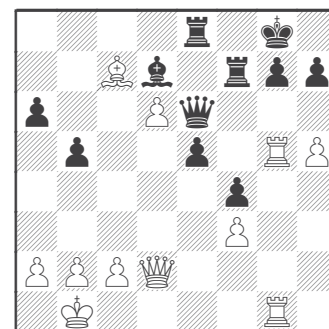
26.♗g3 With the idea of putting pressure on the g-file. I figured that Black was not able to do much since he doesn't have any clear plans, so I decided to slowly build up my position on the kingside.

26...f5 27.♗dg1 Doubling rooks and attacking the g7-pawn.

27...♗f7 28.h4 Pushing the h-pawn

up the board will help to create more weaknesses in the black camp.

28...♗e8 29.h5 f4 30.♗g5

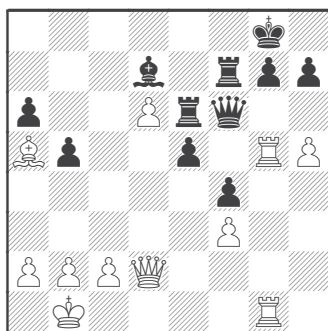


30...♗f6 Black cannot generate counterplay by 30...e4 since the a1-h8 diagonal is severely weakened. 31.♗a5! Rerouting the bishop to c3 will have

devastating consequences for Black. 31...e3 32.♖d4 ♗h6 33.♙c3 Black's position is falling apart. 33...e2 34.♗xg7+ ♗xg7 35.♗xg7+ ♔f8 36.♗g1 and Black's only hope of counterplay, the e-pawn, is halted.

31.♙a5! The only piece missing from the attack is the bishop. Therefore, since my queen was already protecting the d6-pawn, I wanted to transfer my bishop to the long a1-h8 diagonal, where it can cause immense problems.

31...♗e6?



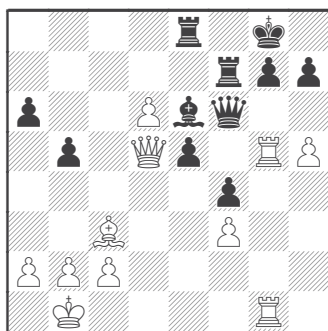
The position was already close to hopeless for Black. However, after this move, which seemingly attacks the d6-pawn, White is winning.

32.♖d5! A crucial move.

32...♗e8 32...♗xd6 cannot be played due to 33.♗xg7+! and it's simply game over. 33...♗xg7 Black is unable to take with the rook since it is pinned. 34.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 35.♗xd6 and White is up a ton of material with mate coming soon.

33.♙c3! Now the e5-pawn is lost.

33...♙e6



34.♖c5? This move was played in time pressure but complicates my task. 34.♗xe5!! is the move that my

opponent and I both overlooked. The idea is that after 34...♙xd5 35.♗xe8+ ♗f8 36.♙xf6 ♗xe8 White has the strong 37.d7!, winning material and the game.

34...♙f5 Now Black is able to defend the e-pawn.

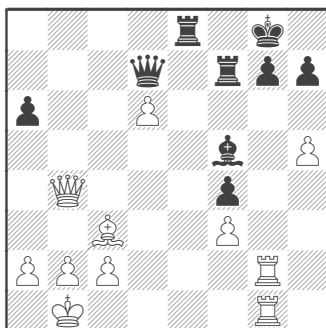
35.♗5g2! With the idea of maneuvering my rooks to the e-file to win Black's weak pawn.

35...♖e6 36.♗e2 After this move, the e5-pawn is lost.

36...♖d7 37.♗xe5 ♗d8 Trading rooks by 37...♗xe5 would also eventually lose. After 38.♗xe5 h6, preventing White from playing h6 himself, 39.a3 White is a pawn ahead and has the far more active pieces, which is more than enough to win.

38.♗e2 Now that the e-pawn has been eliminated, I decided to bring my rook back to the g-file to target the weak g7-square.

38...b4 39.♖xb4 ♗e8 40.♗eg2 The g-pawn cannot be defended.



40...♙h3 40...g6 allows 41.♖d4 with the threat of ♖h8 mate next move.

41.♗xg7+ and since White wins material, my opponent resigned. Following 41...♗xg7 42.♗xg7+ ♖xg7 43.♙xg7 Black cannot checkmate, since my queen is covering the e1-square. Then, after 43...♔xg7 44.b3, White is easily winning.

Black resigned ■

In

your Guardian article ("I was a Soviet defector. Chess was my door to freedom.") you mention how anti-communist you were by age 7. To what do you attribute that?

The day Stalin died, March 5, 1953, was the happiest day of my life. To some extent, my education was helped by Comrade Stalin himself or more precisely by his bust.

There was a big bust of Comrade Stalin in school. If you unintentionally broke a bust of Pushkin it was an accident, but if a drop of coffee fell on the bust of Stalin, children had been expelled, and families disappeared. We had been told Stalin was great and loving, but you felt everyone was terrified by him.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn said that 80% of the Soviet population hated the communist regime. A country you are verboten to leave is, for you, a prison. The USSR, Mao's China, Castro's Cuba, Uncle Ho's Vietnam, Pol Pot's Killing Fields – all Marxist, progressive communist countries. For most men, it's natural to seek freedom, and to hate your jail.

The Soviet people learned to find the truth even in "Red" sources. For example, I watched an American movie, *The Grapes of Wrath*, about a poor American family that lost employment and had to move. It was supposed to show how bad capitalist America was. What I, and others, noticed is that no police stopped them on their trip to ask for papers. They also had a car! That would be like a private jet today to us.

■ **It is claimed you had refused to be a spy on other Russians and were punished by not being allowed to travel in 1974 and 1975. Did you start thinking about defecting because of that?**

On the first part, the answer is NO. On the second, as I noted above, it is natural to at least hope for freedom. The Soviet State treated everyone as a would-be defector, and rightly so.

25 Questions...

by **Pete Tamburro**

...for **GM Lev Albut**

Doing an interview with Grandmaster Lev Albut was an unanticipated adventure. He not only likes to talk about chess, history, human nature and politics, he is a natural teacher. In two days and over eight hours of conversation in his apartment in New York, he taught me a great deal about that dark era of the Soviet Union, from which so many chess players fled. His defection in 1979 had an immediate impact on U.S. chess. Below are the highlights of our conversation.

(Background: born in 1945, defected in 1979, US citizen in 1985. In 1980, Albut led the U.S. Chess Olympiad team at Malta. Champion of Ukraine in 1972, 1973 and 1974. Physics Ph.D., Odessa University. US Chess Hall of Fame, 2003. Albut won the U.S. Chess Championship in 1984, 1985, and 1990 and the U.S. Open Chess Championship in 1987 and 1989.)

■ **What were your thoughts before you defected?**

Leaving my family was very, very difficult to think about. I hoped the Soviet regime would either evolve or collapse. However, after the Prague spring in '68, I realized things would not get better, at least in the foreseeable future. I felt like a scout in freedom's army in the enemy camp of the Soviet Union. My duty was to go to my people and inform them what I had learned. I had to overcome my personal attachment to friends and family. When we flew from Moscow to Germany for a team match, I began to feel nostalgia for my family. The temptation grew inside – perhaps I should go back one more time. To strengthen my backbone, I picked up Pravda and browsed through it. It was disgusting as usual. It did work. I must defect.

■ **You defected in Germany, then went to the US with a "small bag" and \$80 in your pocket. How did you manage to survive once you got here?**

The word "survive" is a huge exaggeration. During my first two weeks in America I earned in prizes (playing in U.S. Open and in two morning events – the latter, admittedly overconfidence, and a bit of greed & stupidity) over \$4,000. And this was not a fluke. Not tennis prizes, but neither survival. I relied on myself mostly.

■ **Did you try to maintain contact with those you knew wanted to get out?**

Yes, I tried to help those who applied for a permit to leave the USSR, especially those I knew.



Photo by Stevan Dobrojevic

[Note: a quote from Boris Gulko in CL, January, 1987: "Lev Albut spent his last evening in the Soviet Union at our house. I knew he wanted to leave the Soviet Union. We spoke about getting out being the right idea, but it was news to me when I learned that he had defected. Our mistake was to adhere to Soviet law by applying for a visa."]

■ **Explain how you became the only tournament player coming in fifth (Kiev, 1978) whose name and games were not included in the tournament book.**

In the same way people vanish from photos: each year brought more empty spaces next to Lenin and Stalin. Trotsky, Zinoviev, Krylenko – Australian, French or Peruvian spies all.

I defected soon after the tournament and thus became an enemy. So, they took my name out in the clumsiest way rather than make a small effort and redo/rename the book as “the best games of Kiev 1978”. Instead, they just took out my name. They gave my opponents a “free” in each round. When they won, they would get a result of one point even though he was free! As a result, I got an effective propaganda tool.

■ **After several minus results in your first U.S. championships, in 1984 you ran away with the**

U.S. championship with a 12½-4½ score, a point and half ahead of second place and ahead of five former US champs (Kavalek, Seirawan, Christiansen, Dzhindzhichashvili, R. Byrne) and one future one (Benjamin). How do you explain that?

My victory in 1984 U.S. Championship wasn't surprising. Just look into the ratings of those years – I am either # 1 or quite close. In the 1980 Olympics I was on our board one – determined strictly by ratings. And ratings reflect results. This is obvious.

■ **Soltis, in his history of the US championships, wrote that your victory was considered a fluke by many players and that they were not happy about your victory.**

I didn't pay attention. There are always little souls full of envy. All socialisms and communisms are based on envy. The Warren Buffet and his secretary story, “tax the rich” is a common slogan. When I came to the U.S., in 1979, the rich were taxed at 90%. I don't recall those years as times of great prosperity. The Bible,

rightly, lists envy as a deadly sin. I prefer to think well of the people, so I wouldn't even speculate whom you/Soltis are referring to.

■ **Did you really feel hostility from the other players, and how did winning the next year in 1985 change your attitude and the others?**

I don't think so. Some jealousy did exist among the chess players, some dislike for foreigners. Tony Miles came to the U.S. around '86, and there were some players strongly against Miles participating in the US championship until after he had been here three years. I felt competition was good, and he should have been allowed to play. Getting funding from the ACF led some to believe

certain players got special consideration.

But true professionals are above such things. In fact, Dzhindzhi, Dlugy and I were helping each other during the 1994 US championship, despite our competing with each other (Alburt 1st, Dlugy 2nd) Roman taught me the Dzhindzhi-Indian (1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.d4 e6 3.c4 a6 4.♘c3 c5 5.d5 b5) where I scored 2½/3 with Black against Browne, Seirawan and Christiansen.

■ **Then, you don't win again for five years until you, after a last place finish in 1989, in the first modern knockout tournament the next year, you sensationally defeated Seirawan, DeFirmian, Dlugy on tie breaking games and Christiansen 3-0 to become U.S. champion for the third time. How do you explain the up and down results and how did you deal with these varying fortunes?**



Lev Alburt, Pete Tamburro and Jon Crumiller.
Photo by Stevan Dobrojevic.



You overstate the importance – especially the importance for me – of U.S. invitationals. In those five “lean” years I won two U.S. Opens, both clear first, performance over 2900, U.S. Championship in 1987 – second place, and, most importantly for me, qualifying for the Interzonal, not mentioning wins in the NY Open etc. More broadly, in chess, results fluctuate, often wildly, often without any identifiable reason, from tournament (or even series of tournaments) to tournament. Any player better get used to this! The chess public should get used to it, too, and not get so excited when Magnus Carlsen doesn’t win first place.

■ **Did chess politics affect your play?**

I usually managed to combine both. When I was elected to the Policy Board and played in the US Open in ‘87, I won both the tournament and the US speed championship there as well as a blitz tournament. During the day, in meetings and on the delegates meeting floor, I still found time to argue national political issues (e.g., supporting SDI) with my friend, Helen Warren.

[Note: any reader with a November 1987 Chess Life will enjoy the stories on Lev]

■ **You were quite an unusual GM when you offered absolutely no excuses for your match loss to Short. In fact, you were quite complimentary to your opponent. Why are you so different in this regard?**

I don’t put too much on individual tournament results. He was playing better. I don’t take such things personally. You need a strong personality or you never will

become truly a strong player. Somehow, also, – thank you, Lord – I was spared envy. Never experienced such a miserly emotion. Second, a real professional – like me – looks for likely reasons for losses, then for likely remedies – not for excuses.

■ **Once you were established, how did you develop your making a living as a professional chess player? (Private lessons, writing, coaching, other?)**

Tournament play was supporting me. I worked with Korchnoi. Simuls were good. I entered into a contract playing for a chess club in Holland. I was also paid for some of my non-chess activities. My motivation was primarily political. I was doing many things for free or at my own expense. I was lecturing on political affairs and spoke at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. When Reagan was about to go to Reykjavik, I was invited to be a participant in a war game simulation where my team played the Gorbachev and his advisors’ role. I had an article entered into the Congressional Record (“Gorbachev’s ‘Glasnost’ – To Liberals the Essence of Hope, But in Russia?”). I loved chess and it was a way to make a living. But the USSR was my fight I felt I had to fight. I felt relieved when it collapsed. I made some victory laps. I did my job. I retired from this and my playing career.

■ **How did you decide to embark on such an ambitious writing career? Had you decided your playing career was over?**

I never could beat Kasparov

or Karpov, so it was time to try something where I can be number one.

■ **Your Pirc Alert and the two books Chess Openings for White Explained and Chess Openings for Black Explained were not only popular but far beyond the normal opening books. Can you explain how you and your team put those books together and what your role was?**

I always tried to get the right, and best team. Alex Chernin is the best on the Pirc. Dzhindzhi is unmatched as a great creative mind – especially in the openings. Al Lawrence is a multitask chess genius.

■ **Your latest book on the world championship is a great book. How did that come about?**

It was my decades long publisher’s dream: to make a book on a level of Zurich 1953 (both books, by Bronstein and by Najdorf) or Tal’s on his 1960 match. Greatest players, greatest stakes, superb writers. A must for elites, but also helpful and fun to read for A-players. I was enthralled by the quality and tensions of the Carlsen – Karjakin match. Most fortunately, Vladimir Kramnik, one of the most consequential World Champions, agreed to provide commentaries – and did much more than I and my co-writer Jon Crumiller expected! Champion on Champions, as I hoped. Jon and I also worked enthusiastically, consulting computers (where Jon excels), numerous sources, other GMs. I am very appreciative of our great editors, artists, contributors: Dan Lucas, Al Lawrence,

Frankie Butler, Jami Anson... And Sergey Karjakin! I hope you will like the book.

■ **We often hear of “secret coaching methods” from the Soviet Union. Can you share how Lev Alburt teaches private students?**

I wouldn’t claim the methods are secret. I am using Russian techniques adapted to America. I am trying to address the needs of my students, to help them to use and develop their talents and skills.

My books are the tip of the iceberg of my teaching tools. I teach using positions with themes with emphasis on their games. For example, a lesson on the isolated queen pawn would use a game my student played with that theme. I give them a program of self-study; encourage them to play over the board. Whenever possible I want them to record the times on each move. It’s a very important element to find out how you use time. Most of the lesson time is analyzing student’s games.

■ **You have mentioned that you have, because of chess, run into famous people. Please share some stories about your meeting with these people.**

I was fortunate to have corresponded with Solzhenitsyn. Bukovsky *[Note: Vladimir Bukovsky, prominent Soviet dissident]* is a good friend. All chess players meet interesting new friends through chess. I was very fortunate.

■ **You gave a series of lectures at Harvard University in March of 1985 (Chess Life, September, 1985) where you compared Karpov and Kasparov in a different**

light than one might have expected. Has that interpretation changed over the years?

Surprisingly, very little. I reread, with pleasure, the article you refer to. In fact, Karpov never was the really devoted communist many people think. Karpov is and was, above all, *a player*. You can teach him a new card game, and, after a couple of rounds, he would start beating you – a quick study, and a true genius. For Karpov, life was, to an extent, a game. You have to play by the rules. You have to use the cards you are dealt. You should use the rules and the cards to the maximum effect. Korchnoi tried to play the game, to benefit from the system. Unlike Smyslov, Tal and Spassky, Korchnoi joined the Communist Party hoping to get some edge over his competitors. However, he didn't know how to play the System. For example, in the interview before his 1974 match with Karpov, which determined the world championship, when asked what his favorite food was, Korchnoi answered Italian ravioli. Karpov picked a Siberian pelmeni, supposedly a “real” Russian dish. Korchnoi picked as his favorite book *Catcher in the Rye* (published in the Soviet Union and thus favored by authorities). Karpov trumped him with a Soviet propaganda favorite – a book on the Russian Revolution, “How the Steel was Tempered.” And, for favorite movie, Korchnoi went with a progressive Fellini movie (*The Nights of Cabiria*) and, Karpov picked a World War II propaganda epic, “The Liberation.” Karpov won this battle as he also won the chess battle. Karpov was

simply smarter.

Regarding Kasparov, my friendship with him was originally a political and chess friendship. In fighting the Soviet Union, he did a great job. Kasparov was right about Gorbachev when many in the West were greatly enamored with him. And for this, he deserves a lot of credit. We differ on Putin.

■ **Why do you support Putin?**

Putin is Russia's Kemal Ataturk. He took the collapsing Russian state, saved it, put it on the right path and brought unheard of, even under greatest Czars, civil peace, order and prosperity. Not every kitchen woman (or Sorbonne or Harvard Professor) makes a good ruler. The Russian people know how fortunate they are to have Vladimir Putin at the helm of state, especially in such troublesome times. Thus, over 90% of Russians would love to see Putin as Head of State for many years more, whatever the Russian constitution says. People know what is good for them (and constitutions, as with the U.S. constitution, are frequently and legally amended). Putin is today one of a dwindling number of Russians who still likes the USA and believes that Russo-American friendship is possible. Just recall how newly elected President Putin acted after 9/11!

■ **How has your support of Putin affected your view of Kasparov?**

I believed, and continue to believe, that Garry Kasparov is one of the greatest world champions, great chess writer (His *My Predecessors* series is a major contribution to

chess literature and history), great chess coach – as both Carlsen and Nakamura can attest – and, very important for me, one of those most responsible for bringing the Soviet Union down.

Since 1989, Garry became a declared enemy of the communist USSR and, very importantly, of its boss, General Secretary (of the communist party) Mikhail Gorbachev, and did a lot to bring about their demise. In about the same time Garry openly denounced the Soviet regime, so did a demoted Communist Party apparatchik Boris Yeltsin; Professor Anatoly Sobchak, soon to be elected Leningrad's Mayor; and Sobchak's aide, formerly low level KGB operative Vladimir Putin. When, in August 1991, a “Back to Communism Putsch” occurred, all four remained true and firm to their recently proclaimed anti-communism, each at great risk to his liberty and even life. Kudos!

■ **What do you consider you best game, the one with the Benko against Benjamin in 1984 or the Catalan against Weinstein in 1984, or another?**

One would be vs. Vlastimil Hort in 1976 – a Benko. He told me he had won all his games against the Benko until then. Another was against Polugaevsky in 1965.

■ **How do you view the current top world players and the current state of chess?**

My dear friend Misha Botvinnik, the wisest of all world champions, who played them all from Lasker to Kramnik (his student), would have put Capablanca first.

Botvinnik also was already shocked in 1994 by

the sudden respectability of short time controls. Dumbing chess down, he called it. I am not a Botvinnik and will not challenge the trend. Indeed, if a grandmaster accepts certain terms – round robin, prize list, over in two weeks – and then the organizer asks him: what if we did it all in a three day rapid, prizes remaining the same, most professionals would say Yes to a rapid. But I cannot understand why not a single sponsor sponsors a single event with truly Classical/Botvinnik's time controls? Found the best by long trial-and-error, and taught as standard to all from, again, Lasker to Kramnik. Another Sponsor Appeal: Wouldn't you love to see truly great chess games, which most likely will be produced in a competition of top GMs, each assisted by a computer? Such events were popular for a while, with the best players: Kasparov, Topalov competing. Unfortunately, rather than giving players more time, say 40 moves in (at least) three hours, then adjourning, players got less time than was a norm in those days. Why? To “save” couple of tournament days? Perhaps, to dumb down chess. Pity. We should give more thought to the Botvinnik era time controls.

By the way, a Botvinnik story. He was in the U.S. in '83, but was forbidden to talk with me, a defector; however, he defied those orders by talking to me quite openly in public. When a Chess Life photographer at the Manhattan Chess Club was setting up a photograph with Botvinnik, Reshevsky, Bisguier and others, I moved aside. Botvinnik said, “Lev, come in.” I said, “They will use it against you.” He looked

Jon Crumiller
and Lev Albur,
authors of
“Carlsen vs.
Karjakin” book.
Photo by Stevan
Dobrojevic.



at me and said, “Lev, I’m 72.
What can they do to me?”

■ Do you think we will have an American world champion in the near future? Why or why not?

With So, Nakamura, and Caruana we have three in the top ten. Caruana might be best with Nakamura very close – he has stamina. I hope we get a champion. So and Caruana are already in the Candidates. It’s possible but not very likely. A chance that one of our two participants wins Candidates and then beats Magnus are about twelve percent (just a guess, of course).

■ What are your plans for the future?

Keeping on a certain level to sell and promote my books and new editions – some are in their 5th edition. I will continue to give lessons. I like my free time to read a book, go to Russian restaurants, read history and communicate with great minds

whenever I have a chance. For instance, I would love to meet Thomas Sowell, my most favorite writer. As far as I know he’s a chess player and one of our greatest thinkers.

In the 80s my job was to educate people and policy makers about the USSR and help defectors. Now, I would like to contribute to better understanding between the US and the Russia. Also, I would like to write about socialism and communism. I think that the real source of all socialisms is envy, driven by slogans like “tax the rich,” “expropriate the expropriators,” (Marx), “steal the stolen” (Lenin), up to Pol Pot’s Killing Fields where “fairness and equality” reign.

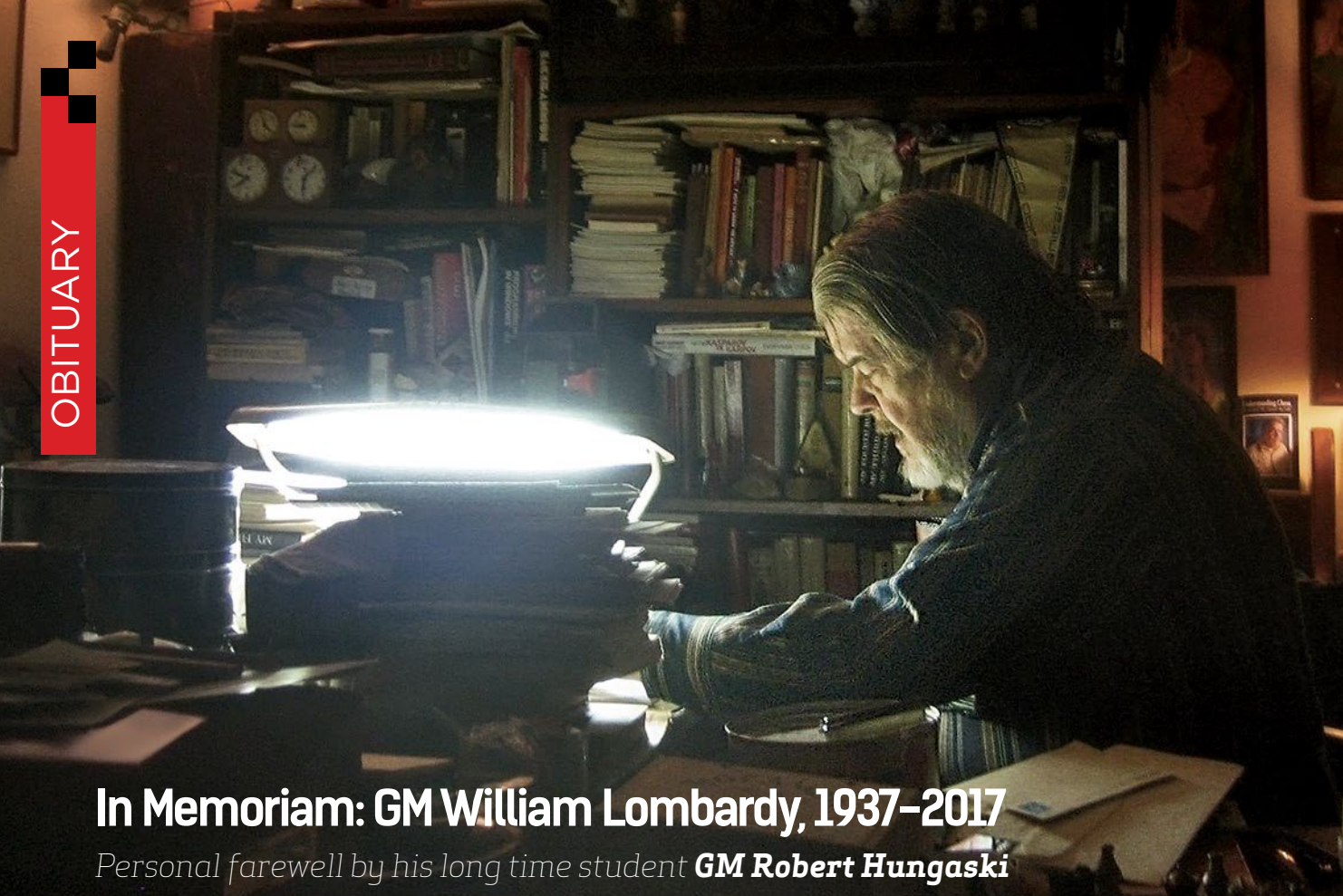
The second element is a belief in central planning and levelling, which supposedly can solve all problems. I personally prefer Hayek, Friedman and their free market. For me, the key word in free market is free. And when you are free, life can be truly enjoyable.

Postscript:

As a long-time book reviewer and rare book collector, I have to comment on Carlsen vs. Karjakin World Chess Championship New York 2016 by GM Lev Albur and NM Jon Crumiller. My heart, for years, has belonged to Tal’s matchbook on his victory over Botvinnik. That has now changed. This is the best match book I’ve ever seen. There are excellent notes by the two authors, who are not shy about using computers, online sources and magazine articles to supplement their very clear analyses. Enhancing it all are the specially boxed notes and commentary by former world champ Vladimir Kramnik, who clearly put great effort into his analysis and his commentary.

It’s a 336 page book with, not counting the three “key position” diagrams at the beginning of each game, 244 game diagrams and 223 analysis diagrams with about 15 pages of notes per game. Game ten has 36 pages devoted to it with 30 game diagrams and an astonishing 55 analysis diagrams. You do not even need a chessboard for this book. The authors take time out to instruct as well. One example I’ll use with my student is an analysis diagram with an endgame (page 75) where they take time out to explain a three-step endgame plan for winning that type of game.

It is a lavish production, much in color, complete with over 100 photos, color commentary, the move by move computer assessment graph we all got used to seeing at the match, the detailed rules and an opening index. Anyone who loves chess should have this on their bookshelf.



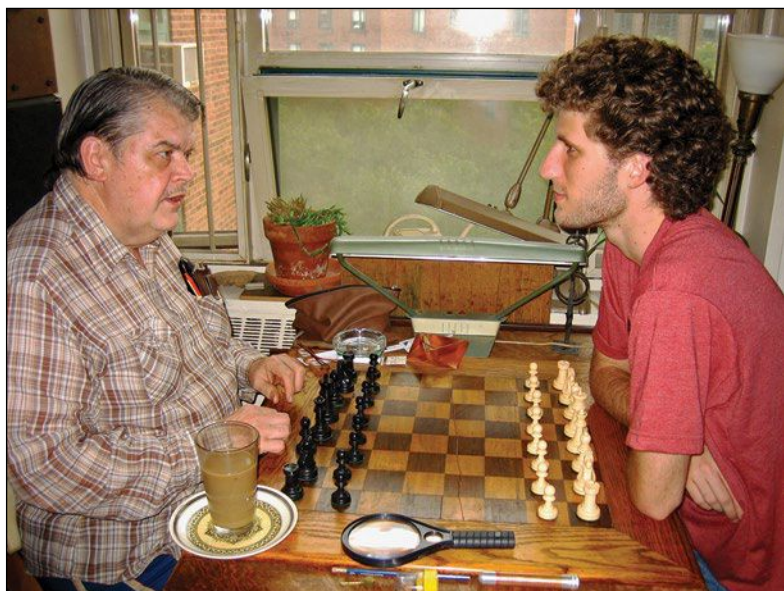
In Memoriam: GM William Lombardy, 1937–2017

Personal farewell by his long time student **GM Robert Hungaski**

GOODBYE GADFLY

I am that gadfly which all day and in all places arouses, persuades and reproaches you. You will not easily find another like me.

Socrates



I remember my father picking me up at the train station in Milford, Connecticut. It was the summer of 2006 and I had just returned from Philadelphia, where I had played the World Open. When he asked me how it went, I avoided the question and began telling him about a famous grandmaster I had just learned was still alive. His name was William Lombardy.

Once we got home, I left my suitcase in my room and went out. When I returned, my old man was on the phone. He saw me come in, raised his head, stretched the phone chord and handed it to me, "William Lombardy would like to speak with you".

I looked at him skeptically and held the phone to my ear. "Hello young man" the voice announced, "Your father tells me you're a chess player" he began, and quickly seized control over the conversation. After speaking for about an hour, we agreed to meet in his Stuyvesant Town apartment for a lesson.

Our first lesson was anything but conventional. It lasted about nine hours, of which maybe two were chess-related. His



interests were eclectic and driven by the intensity of his strict sense of morality. The whole ordeal was overwhelming and I was left with more questions than answers. What kind of a person I was dealing with? Was this guy nuts or brilliant? It was the first time I encountered an in-your-face-intellectual. We became fast-friends and over the next nine years his role of chess coach quickly evolved into that of a mentor.

I come to William as a struggling International Master, just about ready to give up on chess. Desperate, I showed him some of my games and asked him what I should do to get out of my slump. With his uncanny ability to defuse distress, he asked me what books I had read lately. "Chess books?" I asked. "No, real books" he said with a laugh. He told me to do two things: First, build your fighting spirit by refusing to make or accept draw offers! Second, cultivate your mind by developing reading as a habit. He also introduced the concept of a college education as not being mutually exclusive with a chess career. In fact, he argued quite the opposite.

Soon after, I began playing out all my games while also keeping a log of all the books I read. The following year I achieved my first GM-norm, in 2008 I enrolled in the University of Connecticut and in my senior year of college I achieved the GM-title.

As a college student I came to the realization that time is limited and its proper allocation, an art form. All the time and energy spent on playing amounted to a lot of time I was not devoting to studying the game. From now on, the balance between playing and studying would be weighed carefully. Even though I was not playing much, I still kept in touch with William. In fact, in 2010

William was a night owl and was happiest when roaming the streets of New York late at night, sharing his knowledge with anyone willing to receive it. Young people were instinctively drawn to him and he never turned them away.

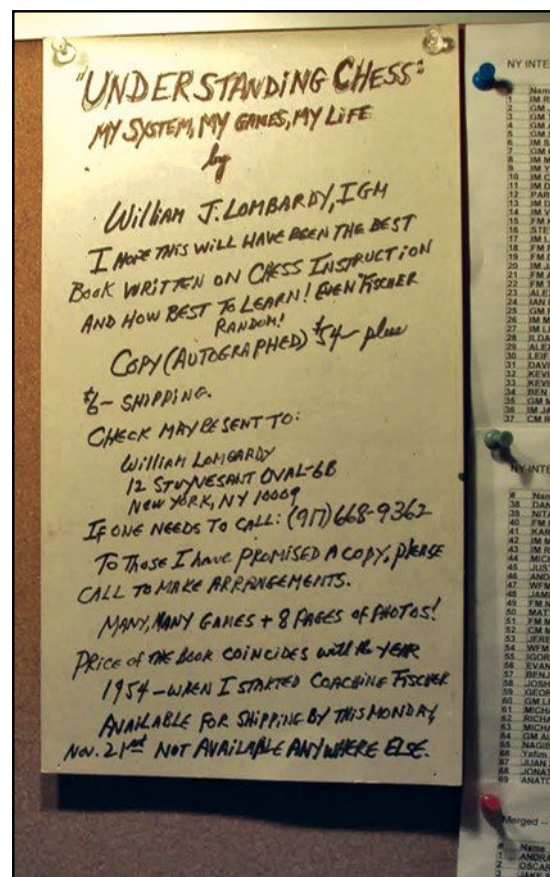


I began helping him put together a book he was writing, which eventually became his autobiography "Understanding Chess".

Helping William with the book was an invaluable experience,

but a frustrating one nevertheless. For all his virtues, William was not a practical man. Lacking a healthy outlet for his anti-establishment views, they would often boomerang back to him. He refused to work with publishing companies and distributors and took those duties upon himself. When the book was finally published in 2011, with the intention of providing him with some much needed income, it flopped.

After I graduated in the spring of 2012, I moved to New York and began seeing William more often. At least once a week we would go out to dinner and end up talking about anything and everything. Equipped with his wooden cane, a handful of cigars stuffed in his shirt pocket and all sorts of knick-knacks hanging from the lanyard around his neck, we would wander the Lower East Side until the early morning hours. William was a night owl and was happiest when roaming the streets of New York late at night, sharing his knowledge with anyone willing to receive it. Young people were instinctively drawn to him and he never turned them away. Those who did not get a chance to



meet William will remember him as a great chess player, but the rest of us will remember him as a great instigator. Despite the flaws that occupied so much of his time tilting at windmills, the best of him will live on in those of us he aroused, persuaded and reproached.

IM NORM FOR
SAM SCHMAKEL
AT THE FIRST
MINNESOTA NORM
TOURNAMENT

A RISING NORTH STAR IN CHESS!

The rapid rise in the youth chess population in Minnesota has the chess scene booming. The Minnesota State Chess Association is running regular high level local tournaments and Minnesota has also entered the national stage by reviving the U.S. Amateur North Championship and hosting the prestigious U.S. Junior and Senior Open. The next major national tournament to be held in the North Star State is the 2018 U.S. Class Championships in November of next year.

The arrival of super GM Wesley So and GM Mauricio Flores can also be credited for taking chess in Minnesota to the next level. The Minnesota Blizzard team, that is made up of three locally produced IMs and led by So and Flores, is the only team from the Midwest competing against some of the world's best players in the US Chess League and PRO Chess League. The three local team members, IMs Andrew Tang, John Bartholomew and Sean Nagle, are actively seeking GM norms to become the next grandmaster in Minnesota. This GM norm tournament was just one of the norm events expected to be held in Minnesota that will continue to attract local and out-of-state players who are pursuing the highest FIDE title.

The Minnesota State Chess Association (MSCA) and the Minnesota Blizzard team organized the state's first ever round-robin GM norm tournament. Wesley



By Bill Broich
(NTD and IA),
Patrick Tang,
Jim Freerksen, with
annotations by
GM Vladimir Georgiev,
IM Sean Nagle, and
FM Sam Schmakel

So was on hand to make the ceremonial first move in the tournament where many hoped to add to the accolades necessary to gain their sought-after titles. The event was held in Plymouth, MN (August 23-27 2017) and was directed by International Arbiter Bill Broich (Iowa) and MSCA's own FA David Kuhns.

The ten-player round-robin was truly an epic struggle among a group of players whose FIDE ratings ranged from 2341 to 2563. Seven players, IMs John Bartholomew, John Burke, Sean Nagel, Andrew Tang, FM Sam Schmakel, Gauri Shankar, and FM Kevin Wang all needed 6½ points to earn a GM norm. Shanker and Wang have earned their IM norms and were looking to accumulate rating points needed to help push them above 2400. With seven players competing for norms, the field was very competitive.

Sam Schmakel, whose performance landed him his second IM norm, was among the four players who tied for second place with a score of 5 points. Vladimir Georgiev and Sean Nagel rose above the rest of the field to tie for first place with 5½ points. There were several moments during this tournament where different players were on track to earn a GM norm, only to see their chances slip away.

ROUND BY ROUND

After round three, Tang led with 2½ points. Tang, a local teenager, was the crowd favorite with local youngsters hoping to see him win the event. Other local IMs, Bartholomew and Nagel, both had three draws each. GM Georgiev also had 2½ points after three rounds.

By the end of the tournament it became clear that the following game was of great importance from the sporting perspective with regards to who was going to finish in first place. The race was tight the whole way!

A45

Vladimir Georgiev	2503
Sam Schmakel	2421

Round 3, Minnesota GM Tournament 2017
Annotated by GM Vladimir Georgiev

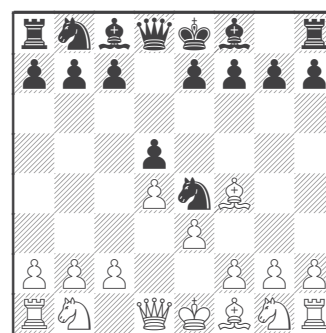
1.d4 ♘f6 2.♙g5! The last time I played the Trompovsky was around seven years ago.

PLYMOUTH, MN

August 23 - 27, 2017
Minnesota GM Norm Tournament

- 1-2.** Vladimir GEORGIEV, Sean NAGLE 5½,
3-6. Atanas KOLEV, Andrew TANG, John BURKE, Sam SCHMAKEL 5,
7. Kevin WANG 4½,
8. John BARTHOLOMEW 4,
9. Gauri SHANKAR 3,
10. Nikola MITKOV 2½.

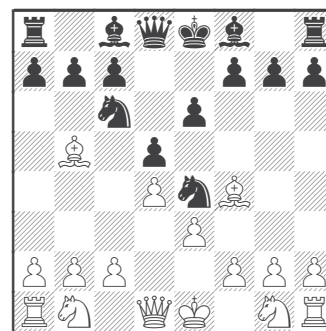
2...d5 3.e3 ♘e4 4.♙f4



4...♘c6 This move came as a novelty for me. Sam played it quickly, meaning he had prepared this idea at home. I understood that he wanted to play ...g5 and, after trading the dark square bishop, also ...e5 at an appropriate moment. This ambitious plan clearly showed me that he intended to fight for an opening advantage.

5.♙b5 Directed against his idea of playing a timely ...e5.

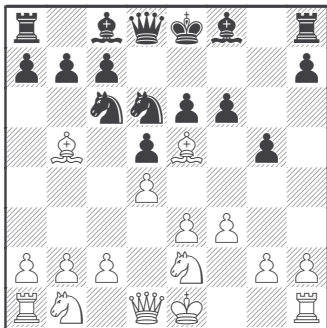
5...e6



6.♘e2?! I knew that he wanted to play ...g5 and ...f5 similar to the Stonewall system, which he used to play before – but I didn't prevent it! 6.♘d2 was the right way to hinder this idea as 6...g5 now doesn't work. My queen is not blocked and I can

exchange his most active piece: 7.♙e5 f6 (7...♗g8 8.♘xe4 dxe4 9.♙xc6+ bxc6 10.♘e2 leaves White clearly better) 8.♗h5+ ♖e7 9.♘xe4.

6...g5! 7.♙e5 f6 8.f3 ♘d6! Somehow I missed this simple and strong move when I was calculating 6.♘e2.



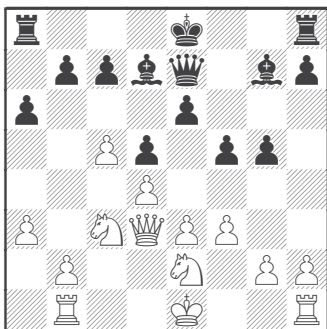
9.♙xd6 I didn't like this move but I had no choice now, since both bishops are under attack.

9...♗xd6 With the idea of continuing ...♙d7 and castling queenside.

10.c4 After long and deep thought I considered that I should be ready to meet his queenside castling. Otherwise he would mate me on the kingside or open up the position and exploit his advantage of the bishop pair.

10...♙d7 11.♘bc3 a6 12.c5 ♗e7 13.♙d3 f5 14.♗b1 I was following my idea of delaying castling and launching an attack on the queenside.

14...♘b4 15.a3 ♘xd3+ 16.♗xd3 ♙g7

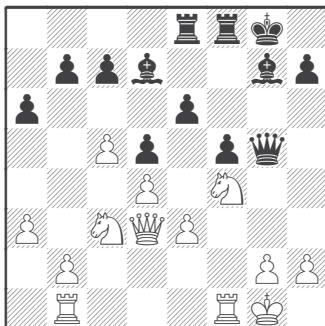


17.f4! I think I won the game because of this decision. Black has to make a choice here: either close the position, which would please my pair of knights, or allow me a good outpost for my knight on f4.

17...0-0 17...h6!?, maintaining the tension, is probably a better way to play for Black.

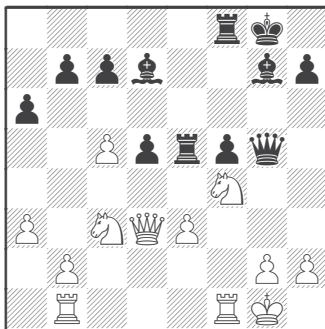
18.fxg5! ♗xg5 19.0-0 ♗ae8! Wanting to open the position by ...e5.

20.♘f4



20...e5! Black pursues the plan he started with his previous move. Since the very beginning of the game I had been aware that my opponent was exclusively looking for counterplay, which is why I played actively too. I understood that defensive play was not on his agenda.

21.dxe5 ♗xe5

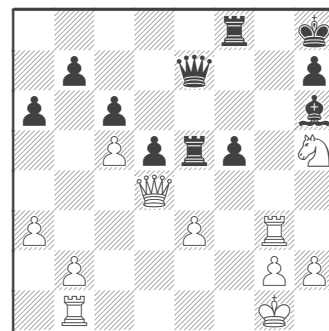


22.♗f3! With the clear intention of attacking the black king. Moreover this move placed my opponent in a situation where he would feel less confident, as there was no sign of any initiative for him. I avoided grabbing the pawn by 22.♘cxd5?!, since I wanted to pursue my initiative rather than have to switch to defense. The move played denied my opponent the possibility of active play with 22...♙c6!, which I was sure is what he intended.

22...♘h8 23.♗g3 ♗e7 24.♘h5 ♙h6 25.♗d4 This was the idea behind 22.♗f3.

25...c6 26.♘e2! Improving my knight and bringing it closer to the enemy monarch.

26...♙e8 27.♘ef4 ♙xh5 28.♘xh5

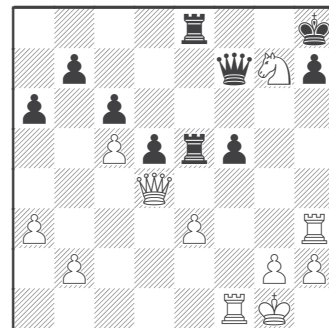


28...♗e8? In time trouble Sam missed the chance to trade my active rook by 28...♗g8!.

29.♗f1 Bringing the last piece into battle.

29...♗f7 30.♗h3 ♙g7? It is easy to understand the reason for this error, as the pin is really annoying.

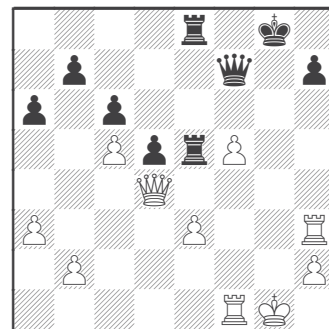
31.♘g7



31...♘g7 The decisive mistake. He wanted to escape to the queenside with his king but there was no time for this.

32.g4! Winning material.

32...♘g8 33.gxf5



33...♗e4 A typical move for my opponent, who always looks for the most active continuations. On the other hand after 33...♗f6, for example, Sam would be suffering right up to the end of the game, which is clearly not what he wanted.



▲ IM Andrew Tang, IM Sean Nagel, IM John Bartholomew, FM Kevin Wang, GM Wesley So, IM John Burke, FA David Kuhns, IA Bill Broich, FM Gauri Shankar, GM Nikola Mitkov, GM Vladimir Georgiev, GM Atanas Kolev, FM Sam Schmaku. Photo by Patrick Tang

34.♖g3+ ♘f8 35.♗h8+ ♔e7 36.f6+ ♘e6 37.♗g7 ♖f8 38.♗h6 ♘d7 39.♖g7 ♖g8 40.♗h3+ ♖e6 41.♗g3 ♖xg7 42.fxg7 This was my last win in this tournament, but it was key to ensuring my share of first place.

Black resigned

Tang had a tough time in rounds four and five, drawing with FM Wang and losing to the top rated GM Kolev. After round five, Burke and Georgiev both had 3½ points while Tang and Schmaku were each on 3 points. With two days and four rounds left in the tournament, Bartholomew had 2½ points and Nagel only 2 points. Bartholomew needed to win his last four games to earn a norm, whereas Nagel's chances were already extinguished.

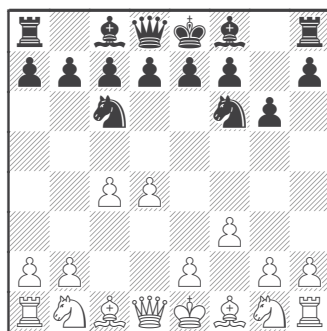
Rounds six and seven ended GM norm chances for all seekers, other than Schmaku. In the sixth round Tang's chances were doomed after he lost a winning position to Schmaku.

E60

Andrew Tang	2475
Sam Schmaku	2421

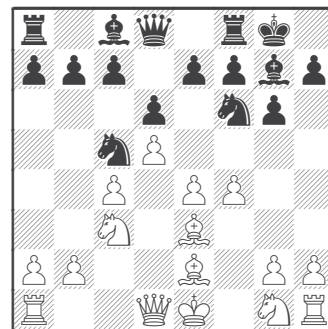
Round 6, Minnesota GM Tournament
Annotated by FM Sam Schmaku

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 ♘c6



I had seen a recent tournament game in which Andrew had faced this line and I thought it would be worth a try.
4.d5 ♘e5 5.e4 d6 6.♘c3 ♖g7 7.♖e2

0-0 8.f4 ♘ed7 9.♖e3 I was familiar with 9.♘h3 here, but this was a new move for me.
9...♘c5



If Black can get away with this move and meet 10.e5 with 10...♘fe4 then I would be okay. However, with best play White gets an edge.

10.♖xc5 dxc5 11.e5 ♘e8 12.♘f3 f6 13.e6 An alternative is 13.0-0 ♖g4 14.♘e4 b6 15.♗d3.
13...♘d6 14.♖d3 I thought White was preparing f4-f5 with this move.



FM Sam Schminkel (second IM norm!) vs co-winner Minnesota IM Sean Nagle.
Photo by Patrick Tang

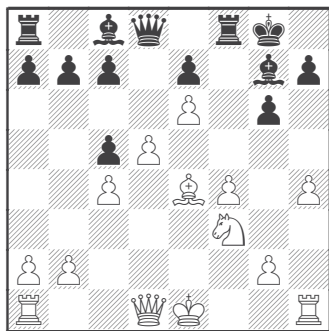
14...f5 14...c6 15.f5 cxd5 16.cxd5 g5 would have led to the kind of position I wanted to avoid, but in fact it might not be so bad. Black can aim for ...b5, although my dark squared bishop is very ugly here.

15.h4 A logical reaction. White is aiming to weaken my kingside.

15...d4 15...c6 16.h5 cxd5 17.cxd5 c4 18.b1 is unclear.

16.dxe4 16.dxe5 was also possible.

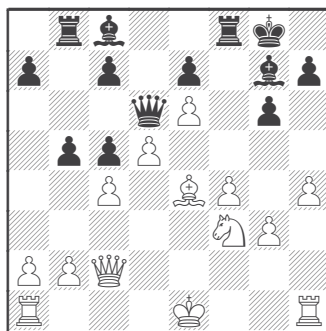
16...fxe4 17.e4



17...d6?! Objectively, this isn't so good but my position is worse anyway. 17...xf4 18.c2 xb2 19.b1 g7 (19...c3+ 20.f1 did not appeal to me) 20.h5 looks much easier for White to play.

18.g3 b5 This at least somewhat frees my pieces. If I'm going to go down, I want to go down fighting!

19.c2 b8



20.0-0?! White wants to consolidate his positional advantage, but it seems that a direct assault on the h-file would have been stronger: 20.h5 bxc4 21.b1 h6 22.hxg6 a6 23.d5 looks terrible for Black.

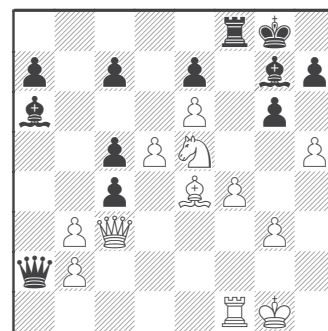
20...bxc4 21.d5!? In preference to covering the b-pawn by 21.b1.

21...a6 I thought it was vital to stop dxc4 but my computer seems to disagree with me. 21...b7 22.dxc4 d4+ 23.h2 d8 is it's suggestion but Black's prospects remain poor after either 24.g2 or 24.f5.

22.c3! b6 23.f2 b4 24.d1!? This doesn't make much sense after my next move. Instead 24.h5 would have been strong.

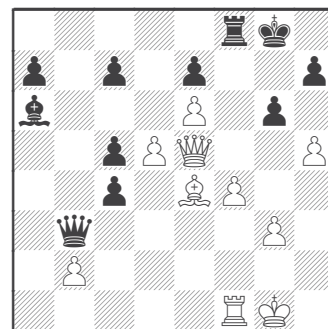
24...a4 25.a1 b3!? Of course at this point I would have been happy to salvage a draw but I thought it was unlikely he would repeat moves had I played 25...b4.

26.axb3 xa1+ 27.f1 a2 28.h5 28.bxc4 b8 is murky.



28...xe5? This is a losing move. 28...b8 had to be tried. Then, after 29.c2 cxb3 30.b1 a4 31.hxg6 hxg6, at least White has to solve some problems if he is to convert his advantage.

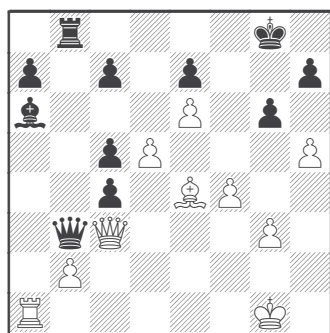
29.xe5 xb3



30.c3? This throws away a large part of the advantage. During the game I considered that White was probably winning after 30.h6!, although to be fair I thought I might have a repetition. However, analysis shows that Black cannot survive. After 30...e3+ 31.g2 f6 32.a1 e2+ 33.h3 c3 34.bxc3 f8 35.xc7 h5+ 36.g2 e2+ 37.g1 e3+ 38.h2 e2+ 39.g2 White has escaped the checks and Black can resign. My computer gives a forced mate in 85!

30...b8? 30...gxh5 had to be tried.

31.a1

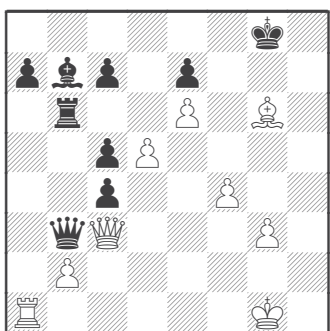


31...Bb6? 31...Bb5 32.hxg6 hxg6 33.Bxb3 cxb3 34.Bxa7 is objectively best but this position is miserable for Black.

32.hxg6? Again, White needs this pawn to create a mate threat on g7. Correct is 32.h6! Bxc3 33.bxc3.

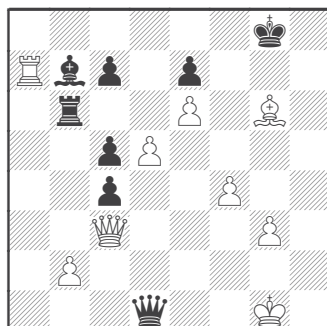
32...hxg6 33.Bxg6?! 33.Bxb3 cxb3 34.Ba5 would have kept an advantage.

33...Bb7 Now the worst is over and Black should survive.



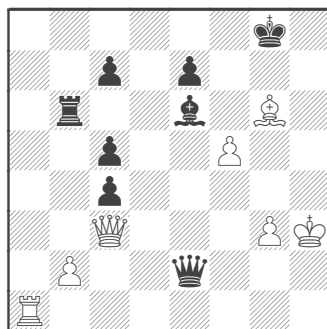
34.Bxa7? This blunder throws the game

away. 34.Bxb3 Bxb3 35.Be4 would be around equal.
34...Bd1+



35.Bh2?? This makes things easy for Black. 35.Bf2 was stronger, however after the accurate 35...Bh1! Black should win.

35...Bxd5 36.Ba1 Bb2+ 37.Bh3 Bxe6+ 38.f5



38...Bxf5+! The bishop is untouchable due to a mate on h6 and White has no

defense. After this game I needed only one draw in my next 3 games for an IM norm.

White resigned

Bartholomew lost to Kolev, ending his chances. Burke drew in round six against Wang and lost in round seven to Schmakel, thereby ending his quest for a GM norm.

C96

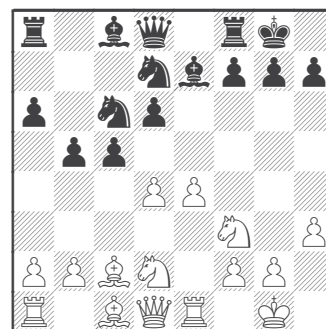
Sam Schmakel	2421
John Burke	2489

Round 7, Minnesota GM Tournament 2017

Annotated by FM Sam Schmakel

1.e4 e5 2.Bf3 Bc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Bf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Bxe1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Ba5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Bd7 I was much less familiar with this move than 11...Bc7.

12.Bbd2 exd4 13.cxd4 Bc6



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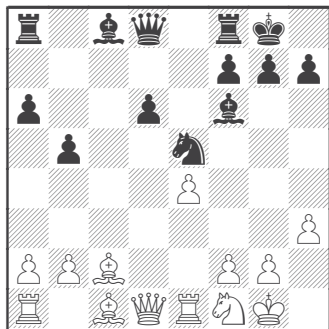
Up to this point John had spent hardly any time at all. I vaguely remembered that 14.d5 was the main line, but it seemed unwise to head down that path unprepared, so I played an alternative.

14.♟f1!? But this allows Black to simplify.

14...cxd4 14...♟f6 is met by 15.♟e3.

15.♟xd4 ♟xd4 16.♞xd4 ♟e5

17.♞d1 ♟f6

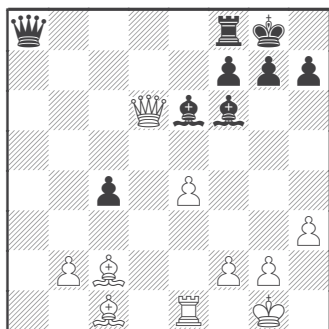


So far both sides have played logically and the position is about equal.

18.♟e3 Aiming for the vulnerable d5 square.

18...♟e6 19.a4 ♟c4 19...b4 20.♟d5.

20.axb5 axb5 21.♞xa8 ♞xa8 22.♟xc4 bxc4 23.♞xd6



Even though the position should be objectively fine for Black, I felt good about my game. The extra pawn isn't much, but at least my opponent will have to prove he has compensation for it.

23...♞d8 24.♞g3 ♞a5 25.♟f1 I was unhappy with this move as soon as I made it. **25.f4 ♟xb2 26.♟xb2 ♞b6+ 27.♞f2 ♞xb2 28.f5 ♟c8 29.e5** and Black should be okay but it still looks a bit scary.

25...♟e5 26.♞a3 ♞b5 27.♟g1 ♟d6!? This is okay but I wasn't sure how I would follow up after a waiting move like **27...h6!?**.

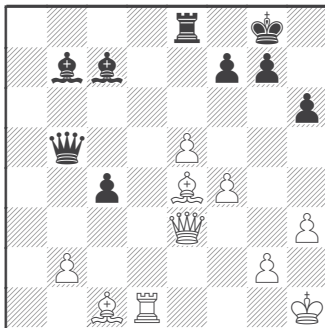
28.♞e3 ♟c7 29.♞d1 Trading a set of

rooks would free my position and allow me to arrange f4 much easier.

29...♞e8 30.♟h1 Preparing f4 by removing the threat of ...♟b6.

30...h6 31.f4 Now I definitely felt my position was preferable.

31...♟c8 32.e5 ♟b7 33.♟e4

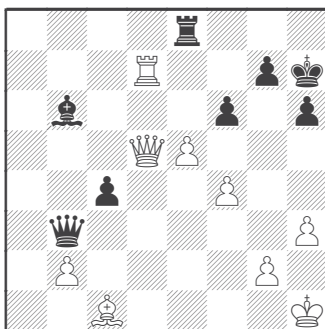


33...f6!? I thought this was a mistake when he played it, but the position is worse for Black in any case. Also after **33...♞a4 34.♞e1 ♟xe4 35.♞xe4 ♟a5 36.♞f1** White is still pressing.

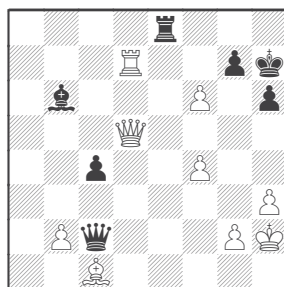
34.♟xb7 ♞xb7 35.♞c5 ♞b3?

Objectively a mistake but the alternative wasn't attractive either.

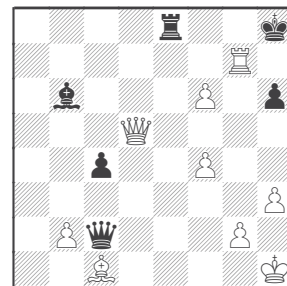
36.♞d7 ♟b6 37.♞d5+ ♟h7



38.♞b7? I was in time trouble around here and this makes things much harder for me. Far stronger was **38.♟h2!**, threatening **exf6** without allowing ...♞e1+, for instance: **38...♞c2 39.exf6**



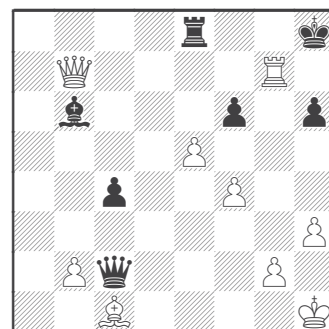
39...♟g1+ (39...♞xc1 40.♞f5+ ♟h8 41.fxg7+ ♟g8 42.♞f7+ ♟h7 43.g8♞#) 40.♟h1! is the key move (**40.♟g3 ♞f2+ 41.♟g4 ♞e2+** would only be good enough to draw) **40...♟b6 (40...♞xc1 41.♞f5+ leads to mate) 41.♞xg7+ ♟h8**



42.♟d2! ♞d1+ 43.♟h2 ♟g1+ 44.♟g3 ♞e3+ 45.♟h4 ♟f2+ 46.g3 and White will win shortly.

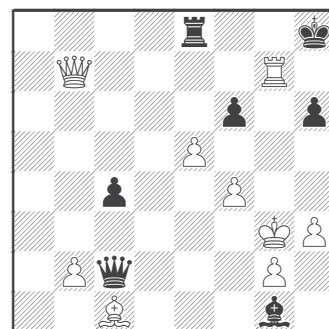
38...♞c2! Covering h7 and threatening ...♞xc1+.

39.♞xg7+ ♟h8



40.♟h2? Now Black has a draw. **40.♟d2** was the best move, although after **40...♞b1+ 41.♟h2 fxe5** Black's position is still tough to crack.

40...♟g1+ 41.♟g3

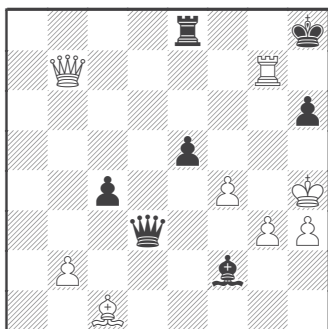


41...♞d3+? Now White is completely winning again. **41...♟f2+!** leads to a forced perpetual. Then **42.♟g4 (42.♟h2 ♟g1+) 42...♞d1+ 43.♟f5 ♞d3+ 44.♟xf6**



US Champion, Minnesota super-GM Wesley So making the ceremonial first move on board 1.
Photo by Patrick Tang.

42.♖h4 43.♗f2+ 43.g3 43.♖h5 is also completely winning.
43...fxe5



44.♗f7! Now ♗f6 next move would lead to a deadly discovered check that cannot be parried.

44...♗e4 44...exf4 45.♗f6.

45.♗g6 This game clinched the IM norm for me, so even though the final two rounds didn't go my way, I still received a nice consolation prize!

Black resigned

In fact Schmakel won his games in both rounds 6 and 7, allowing him to enter the final day of the event with 5 points and with his second IM norm already achieved. He was truly a terminator in this tournament and ended the norm chances of two promising young IMs.

He needed a draw and a win to upgrade his IM norm to a GM norm on the final day of this hotly contested event. However, Shankar, the second lowest rated player in the tournament, defeated Schmakel, thereby extinguishing his hopes for a GM norm in round eight. Overcoming a slow start, Nagle caught up with Georgiev to tie for first!

B11

Nikola Mitkov 2466

Sean Nagle 2419

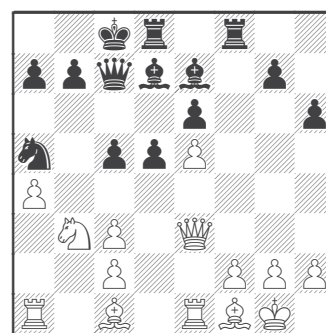
Round 7, Minnesota GM

Tournament 2017

Annotated by IM Sean Nagle

1.e4 c6 2.♖c3 d5 3.♖f3 ♖f6 4.e5
♖e4 5.♗e2 ♖xc3 6.bxc3 c5 7.a4 ♖c6

8.♗a3 e6 9.0-0 ♗d7 10.♗e1 ♗c7
11.♗f1 0-0-0 12.♗c1 f6 13.d4 fxe5
14.dxe5 ♗e7 15.♗e3 ♖a5 16.♗c1 h6
17.♖d2 ♗hf8 18.♖b3



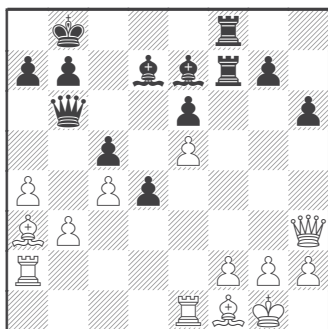
18...♗f7 18...♖b8 was an interesting prophylactic idea, preparing ...♗c8 to defend the c5-pawn after 19.♗a3.

19.♗a3 Now Black is forced to exchange knights, straightening out White's queenside pawns.

19...♖xb3 20.cxb3 ♗df8 Even though White no longer has shattered pawns on the queenside, Black's position is still somewhat preferable due to his pressure on the f-file and the obvious

plan of throwing his kingside pawns forward.

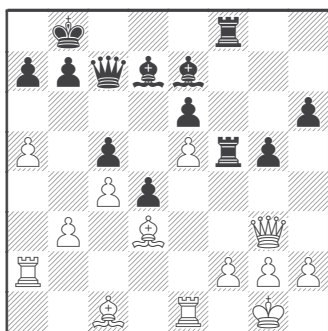
21.♖a2 A nice defensive move, taking advantage of the transformation of the queenside pawn structure on move 20.
21...♟b8 22.♖g3 ♖d8 23.♖h3 ♖b6 24.c4 Defending the b3-pawn laterally with the queen from h3.
24...d4



On balance, I was happy with this change in the pawn structure. While White has gained access to the e4-square for his pieces, Black has obtained a nice diagonal for his d7-bishop and a potentially powerful passed pawn on d4.

25.♟c1 A good move. The bishop no longer served a function on the queenside.

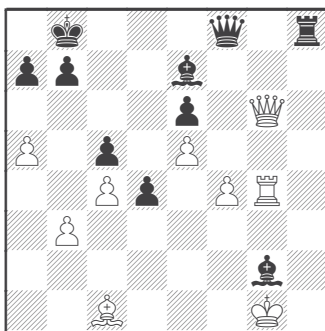
25...♜f5 26.a5 ♖c7 27.♖g3 g5 28.♟d3



28...h5!? During the game I was very pleased with this move, and my opponent agreed that Black's exchange sacrifice was very strong. The computer disagrees and prefers the calm 28...♜f5. Still, I think this illustrates an important distinction between humans and computers. Black's position is undeniably "easier" to play after the exchange sacrifice, particularly in light of White's looming

time trouble. Computers don't take such psychological factors into account.

29.♟xf5 ♜xf5 30.h4? gxh4 31.♖g8+ ♜f8 32.♖h7 ♖d8 33.♖xh5 ♜h8 34.♖g4 ♜g8 35.♖h5 ♖f8 36.♜e4 ♟c6 37.♜g4 ♜h8 38.♖g6 h3 39.f4 hxg2 40.♜axg2 ♟xg2



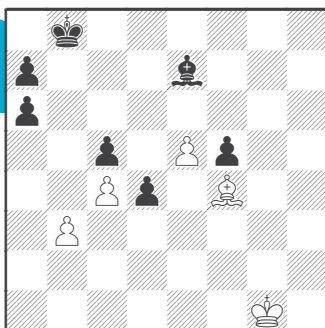
41.♟xg2? 41.♜xg2=.

41...♖c8! Black's queen begins inching towards the white king.

42.♖e4 ♖e8 43.♖f3 ♖h5-- 44.♟f1 ♖h7 45.a6 A good move, destabilizing Black's king position. In all honesty, I think both of us failed to consider this move at any point over the last 15 moves or so. White should have played it sooner, and it should also have been on my radar as Black.

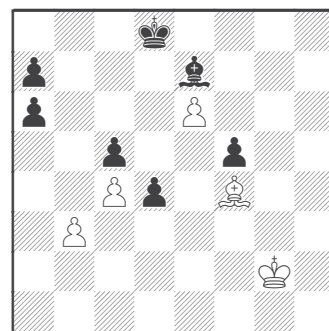
45...bxa6 46.f5 Another good move, freeing the f4-square for White's bishop. Black should have prevented this idea with 44...♖f5 rather than 44...♖h7.

46...exf5 47.♟f4 ♖h1+ 48.♖xh1 ♜xh1+ 49.♜g1 ♜xg1+ 50.♟xg1



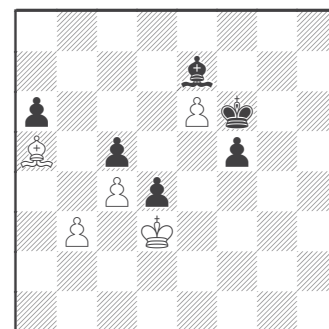
This bishop ending is easily winning for Black, according to the computer, but things were not so simple over the board due to our mutual time pressure. Neither player should be judged too harshly in what follows.

50...♜c8 51.e6 ♟d8 52.♟g2



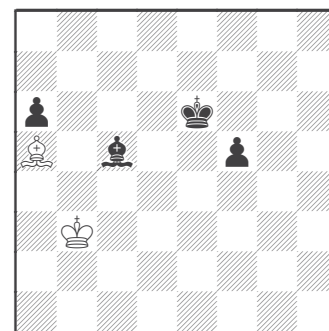
52...♟f8? 52...♟f6 was more natural and much stronger. If 53.♟d6, then 53...d3! is the move I had missed, followed by 54.♟f3 ♟d4 winning.

53.♟g5+ ♟e8 54.♟f3 ♟d6 55.♟f6 ♟f8 56.♟e2 ♟e7 57.♟e5 ♟g8 58.♟d3 a5 59.♟b8 a6 60.♟c7 ♟g7 61.♟xa5? The only move was 61.♟e5+.
61...♟f6



62.b4? A typical time pressure mistake – lashing out in a bid for counterplay only hastens White's demise.

62...cxb4 63.♟xd4 ♟xe6 64.c5 b3 65.♟c3 ♟xc5 66.♟xb3



And finally we arrive at a position that is easily winning for Black, even in time trouble. The two critical factors justifying this assessment are that Black's pawns are separated by so many files (meaning White's king can't



guard both pawns simultaneously) and that Black's bishop controls the a1-square.

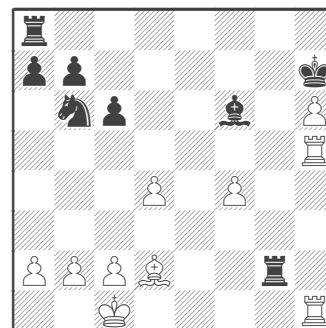
66...♔d5 67.♙c7 ♕d6 68.♙b6 f4 69.♙a4 f3 70.♙f2 ♙c5 71.♙g3 ♔c6 And White resigned since Black is in time to safeguard the a-pawn, which will win the game after White is forced to give up his bishop for the f-pawn.

White resigned



disconnected and a long way from becoming threatening.

22.♖de1 ♔f7 23.♖e5 ♖g6 24.♖xg6+ ♖xg6 25.h5 ♖g2 26.♖f5+ ♙f6 27.h6 ♔g6 28.♖fh5 ♔h7



The position has stabilized and Black now has a winning advantage, although the conversion would take me another 50 moves!

White resigned

Georgiev had 2 wins and 7 draws, while Nagle had 3 wins, 5 draws and a loss. Wang gained 28 FIDE rating points, while Mitkov lost 22 rating points. Overall, players with White won 15 games and players with Black won nine. Twenty-one games resulted in a draw.

The first GM norm tournament held in the North Star state was action-packed with several players in contention for norms. We would like to thank the overwhelming support from the local chess community, and their relatives and friends. Congratulations to all who played in this inaugural event. Especially Sam Schminkel, who earned an IM norm, and to the co-champions Vladimir Georgiev and Sean Nagle. The organizers are already hard at work organizing the next norm tournament to be held in June of 2018. Expect many players to make the trek to Minnesota, the Rising North Star in Chess, in their pursuit of norms!

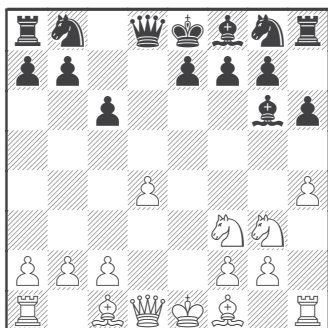
B19

Sam Schminkel	2421
Sean Nagle	2419

Round 9, Minnesota GM Tournament 2017
Annotated by IM Sean Nagle

This last round game was critical for determining the tournament's final standings. My opponent, Sam Schminkel, had started the tournament with an astounding 5/7, securing his IM norm with two rounds to spare and putting himself in an excellent position for a GM norm, heading into the last day of the tournament.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♔d2 dxe4 4.♔xe4 ♙f5 5.♔g3 ♙g6 6.h4 h6 7.♔f3



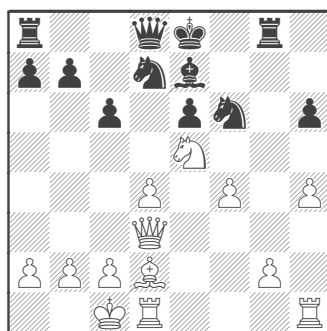
7...e6!? 7...♔d7 is much more common, but this interesting move is recommended by Vidity Gujrathi in his recent DVD, *The Fashionable Caro-Kann*. While Black allows White to post a knight on e5, he retains the possibility of playing his knight to c6 in some lines.

8.♔e5 ♙h7 9.♙d3 ♙xd3 10.♖xd3 ♔d7 11.f4 ♙e7 12.♔h5!? Play becomes very sharp after this aggressive lunge.
12...♔g6 13.♔xg7+ ♔f8 14.♔xe6+ ♖xe6

15.♙d2 This move, which had previously been played only three times according to my database, was new to me. White plays for long-term compensation, rather than chasing material with 15.♔g6+ ♔g7 16.♔xh8 when 16...♖a5+! 17.♙d2 ♖f5 is at least equal for Black.

15...♖g8?! Fighting for control of the g4-square, but dubious according to the computer. The engine's choice, as well as the choice of the strongest player to face this line as Black, is 15...♖h7 T.Gharamian 2624 - E.Iturrizaga 2652, Lisbon 2017.

16.0-0-0 ♔e8



17.♖b3?! Due to Black's strong reply, this move is a mistake. Instead, White should activate another piece with 17.♖he1!, eyeing the black king on e8. This would have left White with more than enough compensation for the slight material deficit.

17...♔b6! 18.g4? 18.♖xe6? ♖d5!?. The only move was 18.g3=.

18...♔xg4 19.♔xg4 ♖xg4 20.♖xe6 ♖d7 21.♖xh6 ♖f5

With the disappearance of White's powerful knight and the activation of Black's pieces, the black king now feels much safer. Even though White has three pawns for a minor piece, Black is clearly better since these pawns are

Igor's Chess Doubles

by **IM Igor Khmelnitsky**

Solutions on page 151

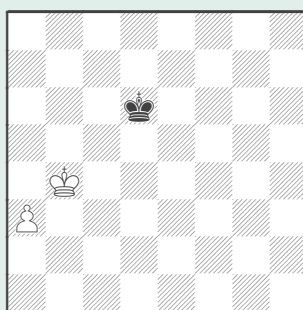


I'd like to introduce you to series of special exercises that I have been designing for many years to help my students in improving their tactical vision, calculation and defensive skills. Readers of my award winning *Chess Exam and Training Guide* and other books know that I have a passion for creating chess puzzles that serve multiple purposes. Well, these exercises will open your eyes on nuances of chess tactics and help you to jump start your calculation skills. At the same time, the exercises are fun and not overly complex. Anyone should be able to follow them without a chessboard.

For each pair

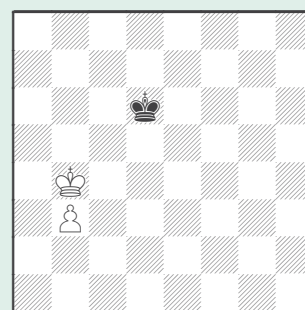
1. See who is to move.
2. Answer the question - Does Black prefer position A, position B or indifferent? Explain why.

1A - Easy (3 points)



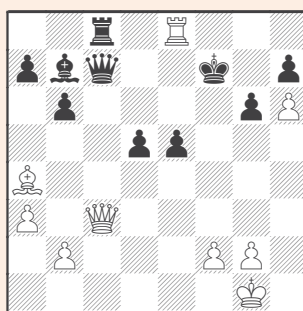
White to Move

1B - Easy (3 points)



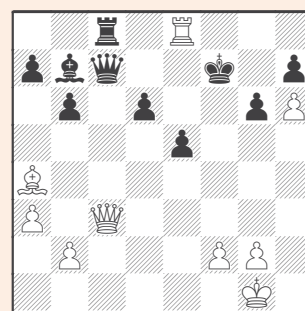
White to Move

2A - Easy (2 points)



White to Move

2B - Easy (2 points)



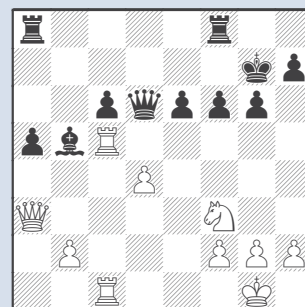
White to Move

3A - Moderate (6 points)



White to Move

3B - Moderate (6 points)



White to Move



TOURNAMENT REVIEW

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2017

IRVING, TX

August 31 - September 4, 2017
83rd Southwest Open

1-2. Kamil DRAGUN, Li RUIFENG **6½**,
3-5. Andrey GOROVETS, Bartłomiej
MACIEJA, Andrey STUKOPIN **6**,
6. Felix APONTE **5½**,
7-11. Vladimir BELOUS, Kacper
DROZDOVSKY, Carlos HEVIA
ALEJANO, Razvan PREOTU, Dani
RAZNIKOV **5**, etc.

IRVING, TX

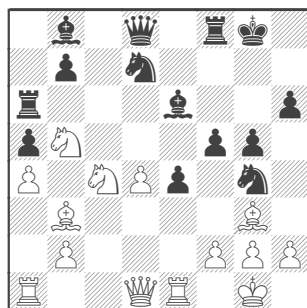
August 31 - September 5, 2017
North American Championship U20

1. Advait PATEL **8**, 2. Nicolas CHECA **7**,
3. Craig HILBY **6**, 4-6. Andrew HONG,
Jason CAO, Vincent TSAY **5½**,
7-12. Jennifer YU, Nikhil KUMAR, David
PENG, Yuanchen ZHANG, Bovey LIU,
Rayan TAGHIZADEH **5**, etc.

Advait Patel **2401**
Jennifer Yu **2313**

North American Championship U20

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.d3 c6 4.♘f3 d5
5.♗b3 a5 6.a4 ♗b4+ 7.c3 ♗d6 8.exd5
cxd5 9.0-0 0-0 10.♗g5 ♗e6 11.♘a3
♘bd7 12.♘b5 ♗b8 13.♗e1 ♗a6 14.d4 e4
15.♘d2 h6 16.♗h4 g5 17.♗g3 ♘g4 18.c4
dxc4 19.♘xc4 f5



ACM would like to invite tournament organizers and players to submit announcements, results and games to be featured in Tournament Review section. Send your submissions to office@acmchess.com or visit www.acmchess.com/submit. Information published here is free of any charge. For advertising space, visit www.acmchess.com/advertise

20.♘cd6! ♗f6 21.♗xe6+ ♗xe6 22.d5
♗f6 23.♘xe4 ♗xb2 24.d6 ♗g7 25.h3
fxe4 26.hxg4 ♗e8 27.♗b1 ♗f7 28.♗d4
♘f6 29.♗bd1 ♗d8 30.f3 exf3 31.♗f1 ♘e8
32.♗xf3 ♗a2 33.♗a1 ♗e6 34.♗e1 ♗a2
35.d7 ♘d6 36.♗xd6 **1-0**

AURORA, OH

September 1-3, 2017
Ohio Chess Congress

1. Grant XU **4½**, 2-4. Elshan
MORADIABADI, Arvind JAYARAMAN,
David ALLEN **4**, 5-7. Mika
BRATTAIN, Walker GRIGGS, Nathan
HOLZMUELLER **3½**, 8-12. Scott RAMER,
Jim DEAN, John AHLBORG, Vincent
BAKER, Benjamin WEAVER **3**, etc.

ALBANY, NY

September 1-4, 2017
139th New York State Championship

1-3. Mark PARAGUA, Bryan SMITH,
David BRODSKY **5**, 4-5. Sergei
AZAROV, Lev PACIORKOWSKI **4½**,
6-8. Justin SARKAR, Ben KAWAMURA,
Jacob CHEN **4**, 9-13. Aleksandr
OSTROVSKIY, Jay BONIN, Ethan
LI, Dore SHEPPARD, Abhimany
BANERJEE **3½**, etc.

JACKSONVILLE, FL

September 1-4, 2017
Arnold Denker Florida State Championship

1. Jorge Leon OQUENDO **5**,
2-3. Corey ACOR, Cesar Jose VALIDO **4½**,
4-5. Jeremy MANDELKERN, Jackie LIU **3½**,

6-8. Ian FINDLAY, Raghav VENKAT,
Bach NGO **3**,
9-13. Jindrich ZAPLETAL, Theodore SLADE,
Daa'im SHABAZZ, Satvik REDDY,
Erick ZHAO **2½**, etc.

PORTLAND, OR

September 2-4, 2017
Oregon Open

1. James TARJAN **5**, 2-5. Tanraj SOHAL,
Josh SINANAN, Jose Miguel
GATICA, Jason YU **4½**, 6-11. Steven
BRECKENRIDGE, Joshua GRABINSKY,
Brendan ZHANG, William LAPHAM, Jerry
SHERRARD, Paul SHANNON **4**, etc.

SANTA CLARA, CA

September 2-4, 2017
CalChess State Championship

1-2. Zviad IZORIA, Conrad HOLT **5**,
3. Jack QIJIE ZHU **4½**, 4-5. Vincent
McCAMBRIDGE, Hunter KLOTZ-
BURWELL **4**, 6-13. Enrico SEVILLANO,
Vignesh PANCHANATHAM, Vladimir
MEZENTSEV, Gabriel BICK, Ivan KE,
Derek O'CONNOR, Ezra CHAMBERS,
Ganesh MURUGAPPAN **3½**, etc.

SAN DIEGO, CA

September 2-4, 2017
Southern California Open

1. John BRYANT **5**, 2-3. Joel BANAWA,
Kevin DAVIDSON **4½**, 4-9. Dionisio
ALDAMA, Vijay KRISHNAMOORTHY,
Kevin YANG, Edward FORMANEK,
William DUCKWORTH, Brandon

YANG XIA 4, 10-14. Annie WANG, Mike ZALOZNY, Nick LITA, Dylan QUERCIA, Darian NGUYEN 3½, etc.

NORTHBROOK, IL

September 2-4, 2017
2017 Illinois Open

1-2. Vladimir GEORGIEV, Nikola MITKOV 5½, 3-5. Gauri SHANKAR, Gopal MENON, Tansel TURGUT 5, 6-12. Dmitry GUREVICH, Sam SCHMAKEL, Zhaozhi LI, Jacob FURFINE, Jonathan KOGEN, Kela KAULULE, Akhil KALGHATGI 4½, etc.

SAINT LOUIS, MO

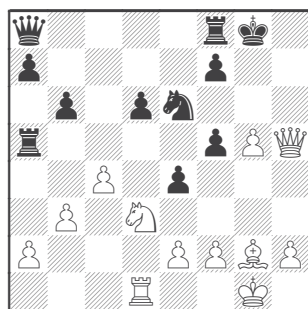
September 6-14, 2017
2017 Fall Chess Classic

Group A

1-2. Georg MEIER, Yaroslav ZHEREBUKH 5½, 3. Dariusz SWIERCZ 5, 4-7. Aleksandr SHIMANOV, Vladislav KOVALEV, Wenjun JU, Awonder LIANG 4½, 8-9. Daniel NARODITSKY, Li RUIFENG 4, 10. Tigran L. PETROSIAN 3.

Tigran L. Petrosian 2615
Yaroslav Zherebukh 2621
Fall Chess Classic A

1. d1f3 d1f6 2. g3 g6 3. b3 g7 4. b2 b6 5. g2 b7 6. 0-0 0-0 7. c4 c5 8. d4 cxd4 9. xd4 d6 10. c3 dbd7 11. ffd1 ffc8 12. wh4 fc5 13. g4 wa8 14. da4 fc7 15. g5 dh5 16. gxg7 d1xg7 17. d1c3 df5 18. wf4 e5 19. wg4 h5 20. wh3 dc5 21. de1 e4 22. dd5 dx5 23. dx5 de6 24. fxf5 gxf5 25. dd1 fc5 26. dd3 fa5 27. wxh5



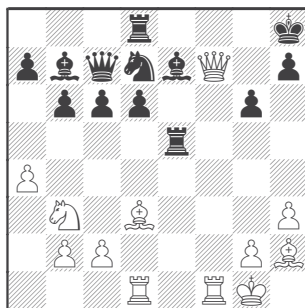
27... f4! 28. c5 wd5 29. wh6 f3 30. exf3 exd3 31. g6 f1g6 32. wxg6+ dg7 33. b4 fxa2 34. f4 wd4 35. dh1 fa1 0-1

Group B

1. Joshua FRIEDEL 6.5, 2-3. Alan PICHOT, Antonios PAVLIDIS 6, 4. Alejandro RAMIREZ 5½, 5. Shiqun Ni 5, 6. Akshat CHANDRA 4½, 7-9. Alexander SHABALOV, Raghuram Rao PRASANNA, Tatev ABRAHAMYAN 3, 10. Angel ARRIBAS LOPEZ 2½.

Tatev Abrahamyan 2333
Alejandro Ramirez 2563
St Louis Fall B

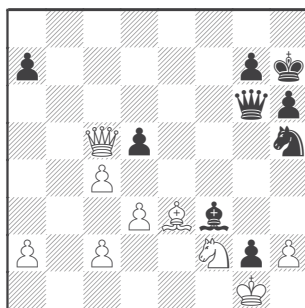
1. e4 g6 2. d4 g7 3. dc3 c6 4. df3 d6 5. h3 wc7 6. a4 dd7 7. de2 dg6 8. 0-0 0-0 9. de3 e5 10. wd2 exd4 11. dxd4 fe8 12. f3 b6 13. fad1 db7 14. db3 ff8 15. ff4 de5 16. fh2 fad8 17. f4 ded7 18. f5 dxe4 19. dxe4 fxe4 20. fd3 fe5 21. wf2 de7 22. f1g6 f1g6 23. wf7+ dh8



24. f1g6! h1g6 25. wxg6 df8 26. de5+ dxe5 27. wh5+ dh7 28. wf7+ dh6 29. ff6+ 1-0

Alexander Shabalov 2563
Joshua Friedel 2547
Fall Chess Classic 2017-B

1. e4 e5 2. df3 dc6 3. dc3 df6 4. fb5 fb4 5. 0-0 0-0 6. d3 fxc3 7. bxc3 d6 8. dd2 fd7 9. f4 exf4 10. c4 fg4 11. we1 dh5 12. fxc6 bxc6 13. db3 wg5 14. wa5 f5 15. ff2 c5 16. exf5 fxf5 17. wxc7 wg6 18. dd2 f3 19. de4 f1g2 20. de3 fxf2 21. dxf2 ff3 22. fb1 h6 23. fb8+ fxb8 24. fxb8+ dh7 25. wf8 fb7 26. we7 fc6 27. wc7 ff3 28. we7 d5 29. fxc5



29... dg3! 30. dh3 de2+ 31. df2 g1ff+ 32. d1xg1 d1xg1 0-1

CAMBRIDGE, MA

September 9-14, 2017
Esserman-Gorovets Match

Andrey GOROVETS 3
Marc ESSERMAN 3

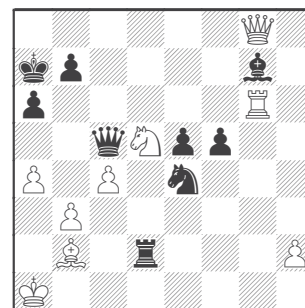
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

September 16-17, 2017
Imre Konig Invitational Rapid

1. Parimarjan NEGI 4,
2. Sam SHANKLAND 3½, 3. Conrad HOLT 3, 4. Daniel NARODITSKY 1½.

Daniel Naroditsky 2626
Sam Shankland 2662
Imre Konig Rapid

1. b3 d5 2. fb2 ff5 3. e3 e6 4. g4 fe4 5. df3 h5 6. d3 fxf3 7. fxf3 h1g4 8. wxg4 df6 9. wg2 dbd7 10. dd2 c6 11. e4 wc7 12. 0-0 0-0 13. db1 g6 14. exd5 cxd5 15. c4 db8 16. df3 dxc4 17. dxc4 g7 18. dd4 dc5 19. de2 a6 20. ff3 fd7 21. wg5 dfe4 22. we3 e5 23. dc2 fh3 24. da1 fd2 25. fxd2 dxd2 26. fxd2 fxf3 27. de3 de4 28. wd5 f5 29. gg1 fxf2 30. f1g6 da7 31. a4 fd2 32. fg8 fc5 33. dd5



33... fxb2? 33... ff8+
34. fxa6+! fxa6 35. wa8+ wa7 36. db4+ db6 37. c5+ dc7 38. fxa7 fxb3 39. fb6+ dc8 40. we6+ 1-0

ORLANDO, FL

September 22-24, 2017
Orlando Autumn Open

1-3. John LUDWIG, Martin HANSEN, Abhimanyu BANERJEE 4, 4. Jeremy MANDELKERN 3½, 5-7. Raghav VENKAT,



Goran MARKOVIC, Bach NGO **3**, 8-10. Theodore SLADE, Juan Eduardo MARQUEZ PEREIRA, Joshua HARRISON **2½**, etc.

SANTA CLARA, CA

September 23-24, 2017
US National G30

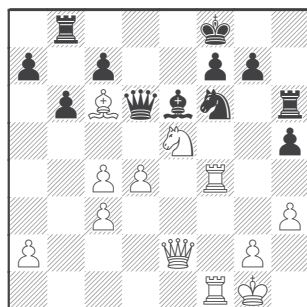
1-2. Ray ROBSON, Daniel NARODITSKY **4½**, 3-6. Zviad IZORIA, Vladislav KOVALEV, Zbigniew PAKLEZA, Vladimir MEZENTSEV **4**, 7-14. Alex SHIMANOV, Timur GAREYEV, Melikset KHACHIYAN, Carlos MATAMOROS, John CLINE, Paul GALLEGOS, Rochelle WU, Sijing WU **3½**, etc.

US National G60

1-5. Ray ROBSON, Zviad IZORIA, Alex SHIMANOV, Timur GAREYEV, Melikset KHACHIYAN **3½**, 6-10. Enrico SEVILLANO, Jack QIJIE ZHU, Ashik UZZAMAN, Shreyas NAYAK, Andy XIONG **3**, etc.

Ashik Uzzaman 2039
Anthony Saidy 2240
US National G/60

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♟f3 d5 4.exd5 ♟f6 5.d4 ♟xd5 6.c4 ♟e3 7.♞xe3 fxe3 8.♞d3 ♞b4+ 9.♟c3 ♞xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♞g4 11.0-0 ♟d7 12.♞b1 b6 13.♞e4 ♞b8 14.♞d3 ♟f6 15.♞c6+ ♟f8 16.♟e5 e2 17.♞f4 h5 18.h3 ♞e6 19.♞xe2 ♞h6 20.♞bf1 ♞d6



21.d5 ♞c8 22.♟xf7! ♞c5+ 23.♟h1 ♞g4 24.hxg4 ♟xf7 25.g5 1-0

NORTH RICHLAND HILLS, TX

September 23-24, 2017
Texas Armed Forces Championship

1. Rudy TIA Jr **4**, 2-3. Jhonel Baldago BANIEL, John FARRELL **3**, 4-6. James



STALLINGS, Fred PENNINGTON Jr, Michael DONOVAN **2½**, 7-11. Jack PENA, Jim HOLLINGSWORTH, Darryl WEST, Anthony HEMPHILL, Nathaniel MAY **2**, etc.

WINSTON-SALEM, NC

September 29-October 1, 2017
Lipkin/Pfefferkorn Open

1. Elshan MORADIABADI **4½**, 2-3. Benjamin MOON, Akshita GORTI **3½**, 4-5. Emmanuel CARTER, Alex CHEN **3**, 6. Deepak AARON **2½**, 7-9. Jay GOSS, Neo ZHU, James Christopher DILL **2**, 10-11. Alexander HART, Neil DESHPANDE **1½**, etc.

WHEELING, IL

October 6-8, 2017
26th Midwest Class Championships

1-2. Nikola MITKOV, Awonder LIANG **4½**, 3-6. Priyadarshan KANNAPPAN, Zhaozhi LI, Justus WILLIAMS, Aaron GRABINSKY **4**, 7-12. Dmitry GUREVICH, Eric ROSEN, Mauro AMPIE, Jacob FURFINE, Aydin TURGUT, Anthony PARKER **3½**, etc.

ARLINGTON, VA

October 6-9, 2017
Washington Chess Congress

1. Elshan MORADIABADI **6**, 2-4. Timur GAREYEV, Denis KADRIC, Praveen BALAKRISHNAN **5½**, 5. Liran ZHOU **5**, 6-10. Mark PARAGUA, Jennifer YU,

Akshita GORTI, Andy HUANG, Jeffrey QUIRKE **4½**, etc.

WEST POINT, NY

October 7-9, 2017
US Armed Forces Open

1-2. Chase WATTERS, Leroy HILL Jr **4½**, 3-4. Robert KEOUGH, Larry LARKINS **4**, 5-10. Dan RANARIO, Gordon RANDALL, Alejandrino BALURAN, John FARRELL, Edward SEDILLO, Patrick DOWD **3½**, etc.

DAYTON, OH

October 13-15, 2017
5th Wright Brothers Open

1-3. Sergei AZAROV, Mika BRATTAIN, William SEDLAR **4**, 4-8. Bryan SMITH, Vincent BAKER, Aristo LIU, James MILLS, Justin STORN **3½**, 9-12. Surya PARASURAMAN, Aryan BALYAN, Maruti SARAN PATTANAIK, Brian SUGANRAJ **3**, etc.

RENO, NV

October 13-15, 2017
35th Western States Open

1. Carlos MATAMOROS **5**, 2-3. Atanas KOLEV, Enrico SEVILLANO **4½**, 4-8. Elshan MORADIABADI, John BRYANT, Omar CARTAGENA, Alexandre KRETCHETOV, Ganesh MURUGAPPAN **4**, 9-12. Eugene YANAYT, Mike ZALOZNY, Pranav SENTHILKUMAR, Alex KOLAY **3½**, etc.

SAINT LOUIS, MO

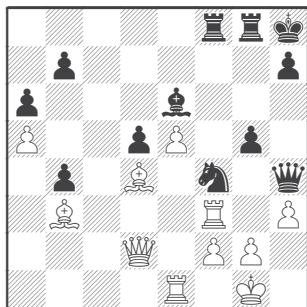
October 21-26, 2017
SPICE Cup

1. Dariusz SWIERCZ, Lazaro BRUZON, Yuniesky QUESADA **6½**, 4-13. Jorge CORI, Ray ROBSON, Sam SEVIAN, Alex SHIMANOV, Peter PROHASZKA, Ilya NYZHNYK, Awonder LIANG, Sergei AZAROV, Akshat CHANDRA, Alex YERMOLINSKY **6**, etc.

Francesco Rambaldi 2574
Lazaro Bruzon 2660
SPICE Cup

1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♟c6 3.♞c4 ♞c5 4.0-0

♟f6 5.d3 d6 6.c3 a6 7.a4 ♖a7 8.♞e1 0-0
9.h3 ♟e7 10.d4 ♟g6 11.♙b3 c6 12.♟bd2
exd4 13.cxd4 d5 14.e5 ♟h5 15.♟f1 f6
16.♙c2 ♟hf4 17.♞a3 ♙b8 18.♟g3 fxe5
19.♟xe5 ♙xe5 20.dxe5 ♙e6 21.♟h5
♟h4 22.♟xf4 ♟xf4 23.♞g3 c5 24.b4
cxb4 25.♙b3 ♟h8 26.♙e3 ♞ac8 27.♞f3
g5 28.♙d4 ♞g8 29.a5 ♞cf8 30.♟d2



30...♟xg2! 31.♙xd5 ♟xe1 32.♞f6 g4
33.hxg4 ♙xd5 34.♟f1 ♙c4+ 0-1

PRINCETON, NJ

October 27-29, 2017
21st Eastern Chess Congress

1. John BURKE 4½, 2-8. Giorgi KACHEISHVILI, Sergey ERENBURG, Aleksandr LENDERMAN, Elshan MORADIABADI, Victor SHEN, Kapil CHANDRAN, Jennifer YU 4, 9-12. David BRODSKY, Rahul Srivasthav PEDDI, Gabriel PETESCH, Stanislav BUSYGIN 3½, etc.

VAN NUYS, CA

November 3-5, 2017
12th Los Angeles Open

1-2. Keaton KIEWRA, Joshua SHENG 4½
3-5. John BRYANT, Tatev ABRAHAMIAN, Danial ASARIA 4, 6-7. Annie WANG, Alexander COSTELLO 3½, 8-16. Gary Ng, Lokesh PALANI, Michael CASELLA, Shiyang SHEN, Anthony GE, Sijing WU, Gabriel EIDELMAN, Bobby HALL, Leonard VU 3, etc.

STAMFORD, CT

November 3-5, 2017
Stamford Open

1. Sergey KUDRIN 4½, 2-4. David BRODSKY, Leif PRESSMAN, Lev PACIORKOWSKI 4, 5-8. Alexander IVANOV, Hans NIEMANN, Ian HARRIS,

Oliver CHERNIN 3½, 9-16. Matthew LARSON, Vincent TSAY, Dennis LI, Liran ZHOU, Matthew MEREDITH, Jason Lu, Colin DENNISTON, Hanon RUSSELL 3, etc.

SUNRISE, FL

November 10-12, 2017
Turkey Bowl

1-3. Yuniesky QUESADA 4,
4-9. Antonio ARENCIBIA, Mel GOSS, Arnaldo FERRAGUT, Eric COOKE, Jose HERNANDEZ PADRON, Theodore SLADE 3½, 10-16. Mikhail ZLOTNIKOV, Fabio LA ROTA, Luis BARREDO, Robert YORISAN RAMIREZ, Raghav VENKAT, Juan Eduardo MARQUEZ PEREIRA, Gabriel LEE Jr 3, etc.

HOUSTON, TX

November 10-12, 2017
U.S. Class Championship

1-2. Jeffery XIONG, Li RUIFENG 4,
3-7. Kamil DRAGUN, Andrey STUKOPIN, Vladimir BELOUS, Guillermo VAZQUEZ, Yannick KAMBRATH 3½,
8-9. Felix Jose APONTE, Joshua RUIZ 3,
10-16. Carlos Antonio HEVIA ALEJANO, Justin WANG, Bradley SAWYER, Nicholas MATTA, Sam CAPOCYAN, Dex WEBSTER, Tianming XIE 2½, etc.

BLUE ASH, OH

November 10-12, 2017
26th Kings Island Open

1-6. Fidel CORRALES JIMENEZ, Elshan MORADIABADI, Alexander SHABALOV, Mika BRATTAIN, William SEDLAR, Joshua POSTHUMA 4,
7-15. Ben LI, Gopal MENON, Scott RAMER, Maggie FENG, Aristo LIU, Mauro AMPIE, Mark EIDEMILLER, Vincent BAKER, Forest CHEN 3½, etc.

SAINT LOUIS, MO

November 17-22, 2017
Saint Louis Invitational

GM Section

1. John BURKE 6, 2-5. Ioan CHIRILA, Ashwin JAYARAM, Steven ZIERK, Daniel GUREVICH 5½, 6. John BARTHOLOMEW 4½, 7. Julio SADORRA

4, 8. Aman HAMBLETON 3½,
9. Raven STURT 3, 10. Atulya ARYA SHETTY 2.

IM Section

1-2. Justin WANG, Luis Carlos TORRES 6½,
3-5. Aaron GRABINSKY, Matthew LARSON, Vitaly NEIMER 5, 6. Annie WANG 4½, 7. Lefong HUA 4, 8. Sabina FOISOR 3½, 9. Carissa YIP 3,
10. Mauricio ARIAS SANTANA 2.

Tie-break

Justin WANG	2
Luis Carlos TORRES	0

DALLAS, TX

November 17-22, 2017
UT Dallas Fall FIDE Open

1 Advait PATEL 7, 2-3. Jeffery XIONG, Bartłomiej MACIEJA 6½,
4-7. Sam SEVIAN, Akshat CHANDRA, Gil POPILSKI, Eylon NAKAR 6,
8-13. Anton KOVALYOV, Timur GAREYEV, Li RUIFENG, Sergei MATSENKO, Denis KADRIC, Angel ARRIBAS LOPEZ 5½, etc.

CHARLOTTE, NC

November 22-26, 2017
Fall 2017 GM/IM norm invitational

GM Norm

1-2. Andrew TANG, Raja PANJWANI 6½,
3-4. Tanguy RINGOIR, Nicolas CHECA 5½, 5. Farai MANDIZHA 4½, 6-7. Alonso ZAPATA, Kevin WANG 4, 8-9. Denes BOROS, Bryce TIGLON 3½, 10. Michael LEE 1½.

IM Norm

1. Safal BORA 6, 2-6. John LUDWIG, Gauri SHANKAR, Roberto DEL CAMPO, Jacob FURFINE, Sahil SINHA 5,
7. Benjamin MOON 4½, 8. Christopher WOOJIN YOO 4, 9. Angelo YOUNG 3,
10. Eliot SOO-BURROWES 2½.

COSTA MESA, CA

November 23-26, 2017
AMERICAN OPEN

1. Vladimir BELOUS 6½, 2-3. Andrey BARYSHPOLETS, Pavlo VORONTSOV 6,
4-9. Timur GAREYEV, Andrey STUKOPIN, Bartłomiej MACIEJA,



Evgeny SHTSEMBULIAK, Craig HILBY, Danial ASARIA **5½**, 10-16. Sergei MATSENKO, Carlos Antonio HEVIA ALEJANO, Guillermo VAZQUEZ, Felix YNOJOSA, Tatev ABRAHAMIAN, Luis Carlos TORRES, Eduardo ORTIZ **5**, etc.

SAINT LOUIS, MO

November 24-26, 2017
Thanksgiving Open

1-2. Alex SHIMANOV, Zhaozhi LI **5**, 3-6. Vasif DURARBAYLI, Peter PROHASZKA, Fidel CORRALES JIMENEZ, Cemil CAN ALI MARANDI **4½**, 7-10. Francesco RAMBALDI, Akshat CHANDRA, Carissa YIP, James BLACK Jr **4**, etc.

LYNNWOOD, WA

November 24-26, 2017
Washington Class Championship

1. Steven BRECKENRIDGE **5½**, 2. Roland FENG **5**, 3-4. Anthony BI HE, Kyle HAINING **4**, 5. Viktors PUPOLS, **3½**, 6-11. Josh SINANAN, David BRAGG, Ignacio PEREZ, Jason YU, Brendan ZHANG, Eric ZHANG **3**, etc.

SANTA CLARA, CA

November 24-26, 2017
Class Warfare Championship

1. Conrad HOLT **5½**, 2. Teodor ANTON **4½**, 3-6. Atanas KOLEV, Enrico SEVILLANO, Jack QIJIE ZHU, Vyom VIDYARTHI **4**, 7-9. Ezra CHAMBERS, Vinesh RAVURI, John CANESSA **3½**, 10-14. Zviad IZORIA, Vincent McCAMBRIDGE, Philipp PEREPELITSKY, Henry WANG, Jaisuraj KALEESWARAN **3**, etc.

PHILADELPHIA, PA

November 24-26, 2017
48th National Chess Congress

1. Bryan SMITH **5½**, 2-4. Li RUIFENG, Elsha MORADIABADI, Alexander IVANOV **5**, 5-10. Alexey DREEV, Alexander SHABALOV, Thomas BARTELL, David BRODSKY, Brandon JACOBSON, Hans NIEMANN **4½**, etc.

TOURNAMENTS

from **ABROAD**

MONTREAL, CANADA

October 6-8, 2017
Varenes Open (5 rounds)

1-2. Lazaro BRUZON, Bator SAMBUEV **4½**, 3-5. Aramis ALVAREZ PEDRAZA, Luis Manuel PEREZ RODRIGUEZ, Aleksandr LENDERMAN **4**, 6-12. Nicholas VETTESE, Shiyam THAVANDIRAN, Thanh Nha DUONG, Aman HAMBLETON, Isan Reynaldo ORTIZ SUAREZ, Krishna SAI, Orlen RUIZ SANCHEZ **3½**, etc.

HERSONISSOS, GREECE

October 28 – November 7, 2017
European Team Championship

OPEN SECTION (40 teams, 9 rounds)

1. Azerbaijan **14** (Mamedyarov 5/8, Radjabov 5½/8, Naiditsch 5½/9, Mamedov 8/9, Guseinov 1/2) 2. Russia **14** (Grishuk 4/8, Nepomniachtchi 4½/8, Vitiugov 4½/6, Matlakov 5½/8, Dubov 3½/6) 3. Ukraine **13** (Eljanov 3½/6, Kryvoruchko 5/8, Ponomarev 5½/8, Kuzubov 4½/7, Kravtsov 4½/7) 4. Croatia **13**, 5-7. Hungary, Israel, Romania **12**, 8-11. Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Turkey **11**, 12-17. Armenia, Spain, Czech Republic, Italy, England, Slovakia **10**, etc.

WOMEN'S SECTION (32 teams, 9 rounds)

1. Russia **17** (Kosteniuk 6/8, Lagno 6½/8, Gunina 6/8, Girya 4/7, Goryachkina 3/5) 2. Georgia **14** (Dzagnidze 4½/8, Batsiashvili 5/8, Khotenashvili 6½/8, Javakhishvili 5/7, Melia 4½/5) 3. Ukraine **13** (A. Muzychuk 6½/9, Zhukova 6/9, Ushenina 3/7, Gaponenko 4½/6, Osmak 3/5) 4-5. Poland, Romania **12**, 6-9 Spain, Israel, Azerbaijan, Armenia **11**, 10-13. Italy, Greece, Hungary, Turkey **10**, etc.

TARVISIO, ITALY

November 12-26, 2017
World Junior Championships 2017

Boys:

1. Aryan TARI (Norway) **8½**, 2. Manuel PETROSYAN (Armenia) **8½**, 3. Aravindh CHITHAMBARAM Vr. (India) **8½**, 4-7. PRAGGNANANDHAA R., Jorden VAN FOREEST, Aleksey SOROKIN, Murali KARTHIKEYAN **8**, etc.

Girls:

1. Zhansaya ABDUMALIK (Kazakhstan) **9½**, 2. Anastasya PARAMZINA (Russia) **8½**, 3-5. Jennifer YU (USA), Stavroula TSOLAKIDOU (Greece), Gulrukhbegim TOKHIRJONOVA (Uzbekistan) **8**, 6-9. Iulija OSMAN, Polina SHUVALOVA, Teodora INJAC, Natalie KANAKOVA **7½**, etc.

SOLUTIONS

Page 146

1. Black prefers {A}. Moving ♠a3 to ♠b3 is NOT good for Black – a drawn endgame is now a lost endgame. **3 points**

2. Black prefers {B}. Moving ♠d5 to ♠d6 is good for Black – stops 1. ♖f3#. **2 points**

3. Black prefers {A}. Moving ♖f7 to ♖g7 is NOT good for Black. White has a nifty idea – 1. ♜xb5, attacking the ♗d6. After 1... ♗xa3, White plays the intermediate 2. ♜b7+, then recaptures the ♗ on a3. With ♖ on f7, Black has 2... ♗e7, hence White can't play 1. ♜b5. **6 points.**

PALMA DE MALLORCA, SPAIN

November 15-26, 2017
FIDE Grand Prix 2017

1-2. Dmitry JAKOVENKO, Levon ARONIAN **5½**, 3-9. Teimour RADJABOV, Richard RAPPORT, Evgeny TOMASHEVSKY, Hikaru NAKAMURA, Peter SVIDLER, Ding LIREN, Pentala HARIKRISHNA **5**, 10-12. Ernesto INARKIEV, Maxime VACHIER-LAGRAVE, Pavel ELJANOV **4½**, etc.



WHERE GRANDMASTERS ADVISE YOUNG PLAYERS

5x5 Q&A

01 What is the advantage of someone starting to play chess at an early age? When is it best to start? And for those who might be late in learning the game, are they able to get back on track to becoming a titled player?

I think the best comparison of chess is to a language. It's certainly possible to learn it later in life, but to excel at it, it's essential to learn it as a child. It has to be understood intuitively, not taught as an academic subject. Later of course one has to study seriously, but the starting point has always been the curious mind of a child. The Japanese shogi legend (Japanese chess) whose career is incomparable to any other, learned chess in his 20s and got to the level of IM. But that is very much the exception, and of course he is limited exactly because of his late learning of the game. I have no knowledge on when precisely one should learn the game, Magnus Carlsen is an example of starting at a rather late age (I forget when exactly...). I think the right age is when the kid is ready and curious.

02 If there are three main departments of the game – opening, middlegame and endgame – what portion of our time should we spend on each? And what is the most important?

I spend most of my life studying openings, both as a player and especially as a

second. So I really hope it's an important phase! That being said it's clear that it should be studied with the aim of understanding plans, subtleties of move-orders and broadening one's general understanding of several openings. Too often you see kids having a narrow opening repertoire and focusing on short-term success. Opening and middlegame are very much



The Second of the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen

GM PETER HEINE NIELSEN

connected with no clear border, and also literature on the middlegame is somewhat limited despite it being perhaps the most crucial phase. Dvoretsky pointed out to me at a camp, and later in his books, that in fact there are “only” about 50 really essential positions to learn by heart. And I guess that even these are mostly only relevant for professionals. Overall in all phases there are general principles to understand,

and again I think curiosity should be the driving factor.

03 From your own experience can you recall any specific type of opening position or endgame theme that an aspiring chess player should be sure to study because of its particular importance?

Nothing is really “essential” but I would say obviously

focus on understanding subtleties instead of memorizing long lines. You should ask yourself a lot of “why” questions. Also I think it's important to be curious in a broad aspect. If you think, I do not play this opening so it is not relevant, you will not grow sufficiently.

04 Not everyone can be a chess world champion. But how can chess be of benefit in life and business?

I have no experience of real life business, being a chess-player all my life! But I would think so. Chess teaches us to study and to learn from mistakes. It is very competitive, and if you make systematic errors, they will definitely be punished. It's clear in Denmark that those players who did play competitively at a high level in their youth, but decided on a civil career, have done much better than average. One problem for chessplayers, I would say, we have a “black and white” attitude. Life is not a zero-sum game, business is helpful and can make both winners, but in that respect chess teaches us otherwise.

05 Why would you recommend chess to youngsters? What joys may they expect to experience on this thrilling journey?

Thrilling journey I think is a great description. The reason chess is not widely popular may be precisely because it takes effort to appreciate it. But that's the thrill of it. The rewarding feeling of understanding new aspects and being intellectually curious is what attracts me the most. “Chess like love, like music, has the power to make men happy” is Tarrasch's great quote. Chess does that, of course, by the thrill of winning, (though that's not unique to chess) but also by the gift of being a lifelong intellectual challenge.



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games in the Live database and, of course, the best online action on playchess.com. Fritz now also annotates and analyzes as you play, immediately providing you with move-by-move summaries to replay after a game ends.

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FRITZ 16

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Internet access and up-to-date browser, e.g. Chrome, Safari. Runs on Windows, OS X, iOS, Android and Linux.

